THE WELL-SPRING OF IMMORTALITY

A Tale of Indian Life

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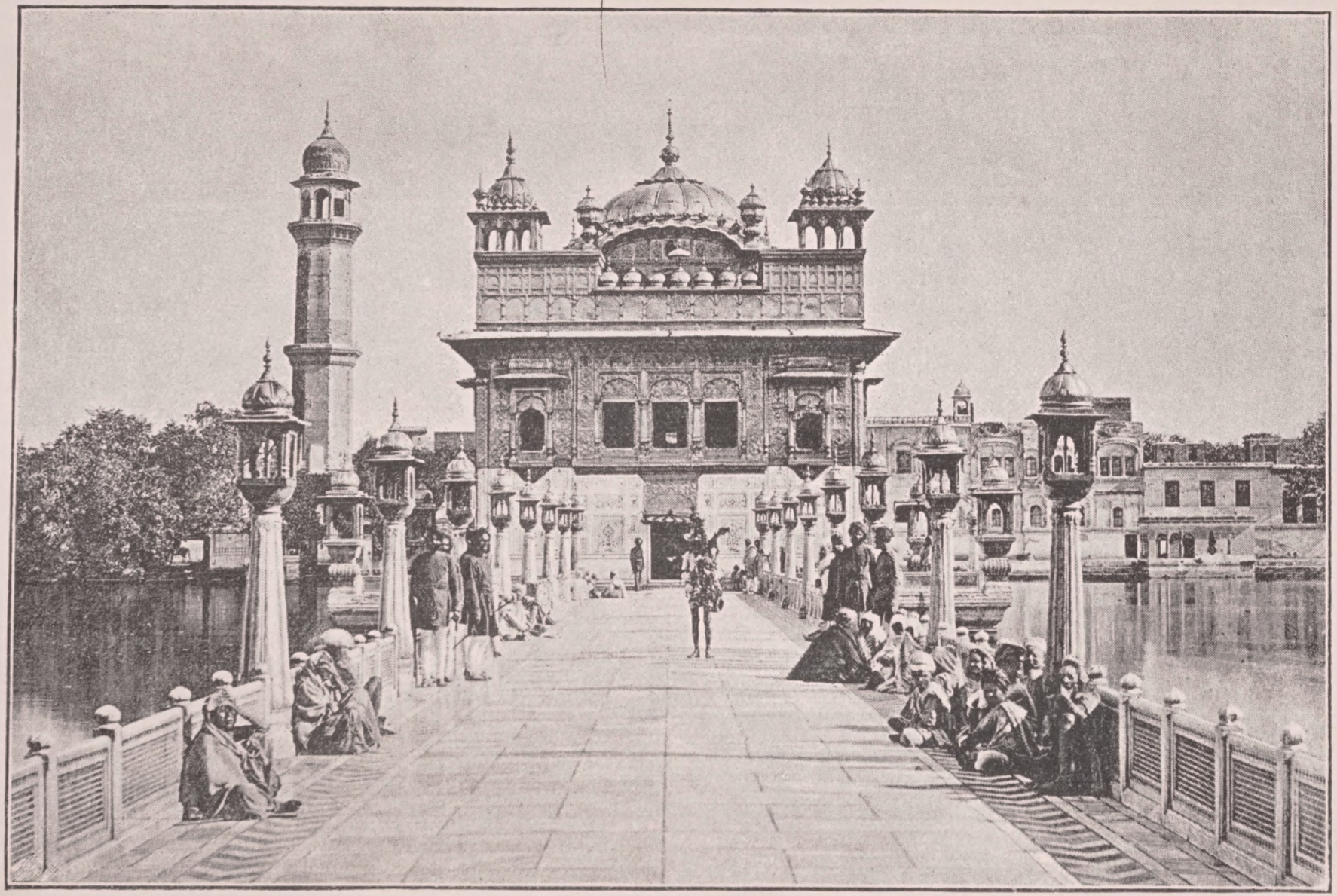
THE WELL-SPRING OF IMMORTALITY.



THE GILDED TOY OF THE SIKHS.

"And the boy closed his eyes very reverently, as if to shut out that miserable mockery called the 'Well-Spring of Immortality,' and he said quietly—'And He showed me a pure river of water of life, clear as crystal, proceeding out of the Throne of God and of the Lamb.'"—*Page* 174.

Frontispiece.]

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THE

WELL-SPRING OF IMMORTALITY.

A Tale of Indian Life.

BY

S. S. HEWLETT,

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AUTHOR OF "DAUGHTERS OF THE KING" AND "NONE OF SELF AND ALL OF THEE."

"The water that I shall give him shall be in him a well of water springing up into everlasting life."

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Amritsar.

Dark is the night of sin and death,
Poison seems borne on every breath!
Passing the streets and lanes, I weep
For the souls who are sleeping a fatal sleep;
For heedless throngs bound fast in *his* chain,
Whose cruel wrongs strengthen his reign.
Idols and sin—a religion of lies—
Crying for vengeance to God's pure skies;
Thousands of women crushed and oppressed,
No joy in the home, no hope in the breast;
Thousands of men delighting in evil,
Thousands of children trained for the devil.
But listen! The Voice of One who knows
The utmost pang of their bitterest woes.
Listen! He speaks in love and pity—

"I have much people in this city';
I have those who *pray* by day and night
That My Kingdom may come and My Will be done,
And souls be brought to light.
I have those who *weep* under Satan's yoke,
Who believe the free 'Come unto Me,'
Which they heard I spoke.
I have those who *turn* from the way of sin,
Who not too late are seeking the gate,
And will enter in.
I have those who *work* through weary years,
Who will one day reap the golden sheaf
They are sowing in tears.
I have those who *joy* and *sing* and *praise*,
And those who *shine* in My light divine
All their happy days."

Listen again! For angels rejoice
At the well-known sound of that dearest Voice,
And something like *His* their love and pity
As they carry to heaven the joy of the city!

INTRODUCTION.

THE following is a tale. No apology is needed for gathering together *facts from real life* and weaving them into the form of a tale embodying great principles and teaching great lessons. The object of such tales is to afford useful and instructive reading for young Christians, and reading which is likely to draw out their sympathies towards Christ's work in heathen lands. It is also hoped that at ladies' working-parties this kind of reading may be found of use.

There is nothing really fictitious in the following story; the characters are drawn from life, though purposely disguised, as are also the scenes in which they are placed. The conversations recorded are such as have actually taken place to the writer's knowledge, while every aspect under which native life is depicted is absolutely true.

In some respects a tale of this sort will convey a more just impression of the life of native Christians, and the trials and difficulties of converts, than may be gained from a report of work among them. The

reason of this is, that in the report there is always a desire to tell the best of every one, whereas in a tale in which all are disguised, the writer can freely write from life as it is; and giving persons fictitious names and fictitious dwelling-places, can, without fear of unkind exposure of any given person's faults, show that there are Christians *and* Christians, even in India, and that all are not drinking deeply, as they might be, at the *Well-Spring of Immortality*. Some are in consequence sickly, and many sleep. On the other hand, in a tale like this, good points can be shown without that fear of flattering or over-praising so inevitable when individuals are spoken of in reports with special commendation of their "devotion," "zeal," &c.; and we can rejoice to know that there *are* mothers in India like little David's; there *are* schools from which they may come forth earnest, whole-hearted Christian women; and there *are* men who, even in official and Government posts, are not "ashamed of Jesus," or neglectful of their duty to "tell it out" among their still heathen country people "that the Lord is King." Would to God there were more such!

The word Amritsar means the *Well-Spring of Immortality*. It is a great pity that this meaning has been obscured by bad spelling, and that the appearance of the word as *Umritzur* has led to an

entirely wrong pronunciation of the really beautiful-sounding name. If we allow it to be written in such an utterly wrong form, we shall ultimately forget and altogether lose the remarkably striking meaning of the word. No doubt the initial *U* was originally employed in order to convey to English people the idea that the first syllable of the name was to be pronounced so as to rhyme with the English word *hum;* whereas if *A* were written, it appeared likely that English people would make that first syllable rhyme with *ham.* But it never does any good to try to lead people right by showing them a wrong way. Proof of this is found in the fact that many people educated enough to have a wider acquaintance with the letter *U* than to limit its sound to that of *o* in *come* have naturally taken to read Umritzur as if it were Oomritzoor. Regarding the *z*, it is sufficient to say that it had not even the excuse which the *u* had for being found in the word, viz., that it was to help English people to pronounce it, for the correct sound of the first letter of this last syllable is distinctly *s*, and not *z* at all. The first syllable is *a*, and it is pronounced like the *a* in the English word *above*, that is, as short as possible. Its meaning is simply *not*, and therefore when occurring in a word meaning *not death*, it may be used for the antagonist of death, and the two syllables *not death* mean *life.*

Now, *mrit* means death, therefore *a mrit* means *life* or *not death; sar* means *source* or *spring;* so that the literal meaning of the whole word is *not-death-spring.* One of the common sweets sold in the *bázárs* at Amritsar is *a mrit,* or antagonist to death, of which no more need be said than that it is *supposed* to be wholesome!

Well, there it is, that far-away city in the famous Panjáb, of which it is the commercial capital. There is the fine name, with its beautiful meaning, and that meaning so false. Where shall we seek in Amritsar for the Well of Life? Not in anything connected with that so-called Sacred Tank from which the city received its name, and round which it has grown up within the last three hundred years.

Some venture to hold that the religions of the heathen can have in them truth and life enough to guide into the love of God those who will follow them with all their hearts according to their light. Let any who hold such an idea come and see what Sikhism (the purest form of reformed Hinduism) can do, what it can offer as the "Well of Life," what a dirty tank at the best, and how far below the mark even from a sanitary point of view. Let them see into the depths of the real teaching of those who, professing to have reformed their religion and purged out idolatry, now prac-

tically worship this *Tank*, and the *Granth*, and the Tomb of the *Bábá Aṭal;* let them watch in the course of one morning *hundreds of unsatisfied, unhappy men and women*, with no knowledge whatever of any way of escape from sin, come one by one, with wonderful perseverance and obedience, in any weather, under any circumstances, to worship the book and to press (*shampoo*) the edges of the Tomb and the threshold of the Temple door, only to go away again as weary, as sin-burdened, and as unsatisfied as they came, and surely the most sanguine admirers of the beauties of heathen religions will be constrained to feel that about this boasted Well-Spring of Immortality there is for every one of its votaries "the savour of death unto death."

It is *Mritsar*—not *A-mritsar!* What can we do? Oh! it has made the heart sing for joy as the missionary has spent an afternoon on the marble pavement at the edge of that boasted Well-Spring, and given away to those deceived sinners the words of Him who said, "If any man thirst, let him come unto Me and drink." Seventy to one hundred portions could easily be given away in one afternoon, with a few quiet words about the real Water of Life spoken to every one who took a portion, and there would still be crowds of non-readers, with a few of whom, perhaps, conversations might be held. One

advantage of the position is, that very many of the people who come there have an earnest though wrongly directed *religiousness*:—

> "Jesus the water of life hath given,
> Freely, freely, freely!"

There, if anywhere, the Word of God should be given "without money and without price." Oh for means and for workers!

To the writer of this simple story the very name of Amritsar is unspeakably dear, and the characters herein depicted were recalled from real life and clothed with their present surroundings during a time of such severe illness that no power was left her to do anything for it, except to think and pray concerning the present and future of its thirsting, striving, perishing thousands. Every part of the city is full of interest to the traveller, to the linguist, to the philanthropist, to the student of human nature with its many complexities and mysteries; and above all to the Christian teacher who searches among these Cashmiris, Afgháns, Hindus, Hindustani Mohammedans, Panjábi Mohammedans, Sikhs, and Mihtars for those who thirst, and for those who may be induced to thirst, for something better than this world's wealth, and who may be led to the true Spring or *Fountain of Life*. Full of tremendous importance is the work opening out for

men and women workers in the villages, and rich will be the harvest of *their* toil; but may God's people be led to give a very large share of their wealth and their power and their efforts to our great cities, and be preserved from the folly of raising the cry, "Gospel-hardened!" just at a period when there is a thirst for knowledge and a spirit of religious inquiry such as has never been known before, especially among the educated young men of our city schools and colleges (who *must* be reached and won if we are ever to see the doors of their zenanas opened to the light of the Gospel). What if our great cities wax worse and worse until the day of our Lord's return? In the very fact we shall but see prophecy fulfilled; and meanwhile our duty is to *gather out* for Him until He come; and the hearts which love these great cities and their teeming multitudes will not always ache and think of them with sorrow; for when He reigns in Jerusalem over all the earth, and ships from Tarshish and the Isles bring presents to Him there, at His Feet will be merchants whom we shall recognise, and wealth which will be familiar to us, as having come from the *bázárs* of cities like A-mritsar!

S. S. HEWLETT.

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THE

WELL-SPRING OF IMMORTALITY.

CHAPTER I.

UNDER THE SHADE OF THE PÍPAL-TREE.

"Where shall wisdom be found? and where is the place of understanding? Man knoweth not the price thereof; neither is it found in the land of the living. The depth saith, It is not in me; and the sea saith, It is not with me. It cannot be gotten for gold, neither shall silver be weighed for the price thereof. . . . Whence then cometh wisdom? and where is the place of understanding? . . . God understandeth the way thereof, and He knoweth the place thereof. . . . Behold, the fear of the Lord, that is wisdom; and to depart from evil is understanding."—JOB xxviii. 12.

IT was noonday in the month of June, when a traveller, who was slowly wending his way along one of the circuitous roads of an inhabited part of the Lower Himalayas, in the north of India, seated himself to rest by a spring of clear water, which, gushing out of the mountain-side with great force, had formed for itself, no one knows how many long years before, a natural basin under a spreading pípal-tree. The lovely grotto which, with the mosses and ferns sheltering themselves in its many nooks and corners, formed

the back of the basin, was no work or device of man. It was one of Nature's own beauties. The rock had slipped and broken away in many places, and had in many others been hollowed out in every possible grotesqueness and picturesqueness, and one could imagine (letting the fancy run on into a "parable of nature") that, instead of moaning and lamenting, as *man* might have done, that life had been rudely interfered with, that it was no longer possible for great purposes to be aimed at or great aspirations fulfilled, since the shock of dissociation from old surroundings and the force of new and untried circumstances must necessarily render the future gloomy and unfortunate, this broken rock seemed to have stretched forth her arms and received into her expanded bosom germs of life from Nature's bounteous hand, and to have nurtured those germs so lovingly in the very crevices caused by adversity, looking forth the while with cheerful though rugged face, as if to ask for something more to do, for some further way of being useful; that she had become during her training, by trial, for lowly service, a wondrous picture, fair and fresh and lovely, "a thing of beauty," which left upon the passing stranger's heart the sense of ne'er-to-be-forgotten joy.

It would have been impossible for any tired traveller to be insensible to the enticing beauties and charms of such a lovely retreat, and hence here might be seen—

bathing weary feet in the basin below, or drinking in cleverly managed hands from the spring above, or stretched upon the upper face of the rock in a noon-tide sleep under the shady tree, or only sitting for a few snatched moments on the cool stones near the ever-dripping water, just to recoup their strength before continuing the hot and tiring journey up or down the hill—travellers as different from each other in their dress, speech, occupation, education, and purposes as the soft moss was different from its rocky bed, or the pebbles in the bottom of the basin from the pípal-tree's leaves which danced in the sunshine above. For this is India; and the shady nook in which we are for a while forgetting the glaring heat and the dusty plains; and the delicious splash of the mountain stream above, with its accompaniment of lighter "drip, drip, drip" into many lesser basin-like corners in the recesses of the rocky reservoir beneath, cheating us so charmingly into believing that we never knew what it was to be scorched in our city-home as at the mouth of a fiery furnace—*these* are the delights of a resting-place on the high-road from one of the stations on the burning plains to a mountain sanitarium; and the stream of human life which so continuously passes that restful and enticing spot is wonderfully interesting to watch, carrying on, as it does, men from so many different homes, and with so many different objects and hopes in their

hearts, as they tread the mountain way. We shall understand this better as we hear the story of one weary traveller who seated himself by the refreshing water on that summer day.

He was an old man, as age goes in India. We of Western growth might have guessed him to have passed the appointed "threescore years and ten" of human life. But no; he was only just sixty, though his white hair and stooping posture and feeble gait deceived the casual observer into thinking him burdened with the weight of many more years.

His dress was coarse and scanty, and each separate piece of cloth of which it was composed (for none of his clothes could be rightly called made-up articles of dress) was dyed a curious ochre-colour, by which he was known to all who met him as a *faqír* or holy beggar.

As in every other occupation, trade, or profession (call it what you will), so in that of the *faqír*, it is true that men of all sorts are represented in its ranks, and it is probably not too much to say that every variety of mental tone, every stamp of moral character, may be found among *faqírs*. There are the low, vulgar cheats (any number of them) whose one object is to accumulate money at the cost of all virtue and all decency. Holy men, forsooth! who can draw on the credulities of a people debased

by idolatry and superstition, and persuade them to pay for the gratification of gazing on a naked and vilely unclean wretch the while he affects to cut out his own tongue and hold it up before their astonished eyes, and then to replace it and wag it as glibly as before in the service of the devil, arguing that if he can work such a miracle as this he must be worthy of trust and worship, and—most important of all—of payment!

One could laugh at the sorry spectacle of a man willing to use the noble faculties given him by his beneficent Creator, just to perfect himself in the ugly trick of rolling back his own tongue into an almost inconceivably small space in order to make room in his mouth for the freshly cut-off sheep's tongue with which he is going to deceive the senses of his degraded admirers; and one could ironically wish him joy of his sickening occupation if it were not for the overwhelming sense of shame and sorrow which must fill the heart of the Christian as he meditates on the revolting scene, and remembers that man sunk so fearfully low is in all such acts of depravity stamping out the last trace of Him who created him upright and holy and in His own image.

There are no forms of human suffering or infirmity which *faqîrs* do not profess to cure, and the processes to be undergone by those who allow themselves to be

practised upon are not at all dissimilar in their essential characteristics from those prescribed by professing healers among the gipsy tribes in civilised lands. The main features of these impostors are brazen-faced lying, clever sleight-of-hand, a certain amount of knowledge of human nature, a smattering of some kind of philosophic or medical or religious lore, or the *semblance* of it, and, above all, an impudent self-assertion and hypocritical proclamation of sanctity perfectly amazing for arrogance to all except the *duped*, on whose part nothing is requisite save an utterly astounding stock of credulity and a fair supply of pice.

But there are *faqírs* and *faqírs*, and all are not of this class of knaves, who can only be described as "deceiving and being deceived."

Some are, with more or less sincerity of purpose, seeking to lead a life of repentance and self-mortification on account of sin, and by the practice of austerities, often undergone with devotion and patience worthy of a better cause, to win for themselves the favour of God and everlasting life.

All in the darkness of ignorance and superstition as these poor deluded ones are, they are yet not so debased and evil as those others of their fraternity whose successful attempts to become rich at the cost of their foolish followers and victims have given the name of *faqír* an evil repute which scarcely leaves room to believe anything good of one of the clan.

The old man who wearily took his seat on the mossy stone by the splashing water, and reached forth two hard and weather-worn hands to carry the refreshing draught to his thirsty lips, bore on his countenance traces of severe suffering and toil, but not of mean trickery or debasing evil. He had an eager, searching, unsatisfied look in his eyes; and a firm decision, as of one bent on fulfilling a mission or gaining an end, seemed to be written in every line of his rugged features.

For some time after taking his seat and laying aside his wallet he leaned thoughtfully on the top of his traveller's staff and gazed earnestly at the gushing water.

Other men who were also sitting there to rest spoke at first no word to the venerable stranger, for they knew by his dress and appearance that he was a "holy man," and they imagined that, until he spoke, he would not be pleased to have rudely interrupted his silent intercourse with the Great Unknown Being whose follower they believed him to be. They rightly conjectured what his wishes and feelings were, for the old man closed his eyes for a moment and spoke in a half-audible voice as if to some one unseen, the meanwhile handling, and apparently counting, the berries which hung round his neck on a string, strikingly like the rosary of the Roman Catholics.

"Not yet," he murmured, "not yet have I found the grand object of all my toils. Great Spirit! still lead on; but, oh! make short my journey! make easy my difficulties! make smooth my rough places! lest, having searched through all my weary life for that which alone can give me rest, I perish miserably without Thy light and favour."

The old man raised his head. His look was very troubled, and he pressed one hand upon his brow, as if to think more intently, looking out from his leafy and cool retreat over the hills and towards the sky, seeming to long to pierce those clouds all glittering in the sunshine, and see the mystery of that creative and sustaining power which must be there, if he could only find and fathom it! And surely that power must be the same, the very same, which alone could take the sting and misery out of sinful lives and make men all like God! He longed for God; he longed to *know* Him; yet the more he strove, the deeper grew his darkness; and the more he sought for satisfaction in the wonders of God's creation, the more insatiable became his thirst, the more intense the passionate longing of his soul for something all as yet unknown, unfathomed, and unsearchable.

At length, after a deep sigh, he turned himself towards the little group of other travellers and spoke—"*Salám*, brothers; is it well with you all?"

"And so. . . . the group of resting wayfarers listened to the old man's story.
—*Page* 9.

Immediately many little marks of honour were shown him, and one or two of the men did homage before him in a manner which proved that they gave his sanctity a very exalted place in their imaginations.

He was passive under rather than pleased with their tokens of respect; and after a moment's pause he asked them if they knew him. Every one answered that they had not had that honour until to-day, but that it required no great discernment on their parts to know him holy and worthy of all their reverence and love. He smiled sadly, and asked if they would like to hear the story of an old man's life. Gladly did they assent to this proposal; for, whatever be the subject, the people of India love to talk and to hear talking. And so, in the sultry noontide, with the water splashing from its source above into its rocky basin beneath, and with the soft mountain airs now and then gently stirring the light foliage overhead, and the birds of the many little forests of the hill-sides sending forth their melodious songs of praise, the group of resting wayfarers, in various attitudes of interest and attention, listened to the old man's story. Possibly some heard all he said without noticing anything peculiarly striking in his look and manner, but the more careful observer would see an eager, unsatisfied, searching expression on that fine, rugged countenance, an expression which, in all its unsatisfied

yearning, seemed yet to betoken a knowledge that satisfaction had been claimed by *some* men as attainable, and which appeared, in its mute, pathetic wistfulness, to say—

"GIVE ME THIS WATER, THAT I THIRST NOT!"

CHAPTER II.

THE OLD MAN'S STORY.

There is something which touches the heart
With a pity which makes it sore,
In the sight of the weary pilgrim
Completing his long threescore,
Whose life has been spent in searching,
With steadfast purpose and will,
For something he feels to be lacking,
And here it is lacking still!
The years as they passed have not brought it,
No sages the secret have told;
He has longed, he has prayed, he has sought it,
He has wished he could buy it with gold.
And now the grey hairs are upon him,
And dim are the wistful, sad eyes;
And life, with its searching and toiling,
Behind him all desolate lies.
As we pass on the world's dusty highway,
We gaze on the dear, rugged face,
And see of unsatisfied longing
Full many a pitiful trace;
And the thought in our hearts may be pleading
(Perhaps he will hear and believe!),
"'Tis Jesus, 'tis Jesus you're needing,
And Jesus will sinners receive!"
Yes, speak to him, brothers and sisters,
Speak, speak, in the fulness of love;
Shall he perish by earth's weary highway,
While the well-spring of life from above
Is pouring its plentiful waters
For him in his thirst and distress?
Oh, speak to him, brothers and sisters,
The *One Name* all-powerful to bless!

My name is Narain Dáss. I was born in Benares, the city famous all over the world as great and holy and dedicated to worship. My father was a worker in brass, and my earliest recollections are of the brass-workers' *bázár* and all its glittering wares. Plates, cups, and all kinds of cooking utensils were sold there, and so were bells and gongs of every size and shape and sound, the handles of the bells being generally formed in the shape of some devil's figure, thus doing honour to Shiv, Ganesh, Hamumum, or Indrá. My greatest delight was to be carried astride on my father's shoulder to this *bázár*, and to be seated among the bright and pretty goods, with which I loved to play, and whose jingling noise I fully appreciated. I was, perhaps, about three years old when I was first taken by my father as his companion in this way, and at that time there was another little boy, whose name was Shiv Jí, going daily with his father, a seller of fruit in a *chauk* where our *bázár* joined another, and where all day long he sat by his father's fruit-baskets, and watched and listened until he learnt how to barter and bargain for himself. As we grew older that little boy and I became great friends, and one of our first friendly acts was when I exchanged with him one of my father's very small brass bells for a fine melon. The melon was soon devoured, and its rind and seeds trampled under foot in the street, but the little bell remained as a witness of the transaction, and I nearly lost the

companionship of Shiv Jí, but was able at last to persuade my father that my little friend was not a thief.

Playing all day in the shop, I saw and heard much which was unsuited to the understanding of my tender age, and a spirit of inquiry was awakened within me which my father was often quite unable to satisfy. I was specially interested in the Holy River, as I suppose all Benares children are; and great was my joy on those festive days when decorations and illuminations showed the love and loyalty of the people for "Má Ganga." My parents duly instructed me in all the duties of religion, and every proper ceremony was observed on all the great days of my life as long as I remained with them. I had a great respect for my father, partly because I admired his handicraft, and partly because every one said he was a good man; but I never remember any very great *love* for him, as I feared his displeasure and disliked to see him passionate; and still further, I could never believe that any one who could do something which I once knew him do could be, by any possibility, beloved. I will tell you what that something was. I was passionately fond of my mother, and greatly afflicted, as far as a child could be, when I noticed that she was not happy.

Poor thing! how could she be happy? When I first remember playing with her, at times when we

happened to be alone, I was about three, and she, I believe, only sixteen years of age. I was her first-born child, and, as she delighted to call me, her star, her flower, her treasure. I had come to her when, as a mere child, she was undergoing the trial of severe unkindness from my grandmother, who had, of course, as the mother-in-law, unlimited power over her and the other Bahus, of whom there were three in the house. The sole cause of the unkindness was the fact that my mother was poor, and my grandmother had hoped to become very rich by obtaining women with plenty of jewels and money as wives for her four sons. When my father's marriage had been arranged there had been some unfair dealing on the part of my mother's family, and it was not until the ceremonies were completed that it was discovered that the bride was weakly and delicate in health, and far less rich in worldly goods than had been supposed. Many people had then advised my father to decline to have his bride brought home, but he had not been so displeased as his mother, and had accepted the poor little wife without remonstrance. His mother had, from the hour of the child's arrival in the house (a poor, sad little thing of only nine years of age), vented her anger and disappointment upon her, and had made her life very miserable indeed. My father's elder brother's wife was a woman of an unkind temper and selfish disposition, and she always made common cause with my

grandmother to add to the unhappiness of the poor little Bahu.

When I was only two years old, two little brothers came to be the sharers with me of my mother's love. Of course, I have no recollection of the event, but have very distinct remembrances of my poor mother's oft-repeated histories afterwards. She would tell me again and again of the joy in the house when these twin sons were born, of how all that a man in so humble a position as my father's could do to mark the auspicious day was ungrudgingly done, and of the heavy debts which he incurred in order to have more grandeur and feasting in honour of his twin boys.

Then she would pause, and sigh and weep, and say how she had fondly hoped that perhaps now the heart of her mother-in-law might soften towards her, and she might begin to see happy days, full of feasting and good-humour and mirth, while all people would look upon her with great honour and respect, as she was at the early age of fifteen the mother of three sons. But her fond hopes all perished, for when my little twin brothers were only six weeks old our city of Benares was visited by a severe epidemic of smallpox, and although I entirely escaped the disease, those two hapless infants took it, and died within two or three days of each other, leaving my young mother to suffer not alone the anguish of her grief at their untimely

of love for him which should naturally have found place in my young heart.

A little sister was born. There was no joy. I can remember *that;* yes, I remember it all. I remember my grandmother's angry face, and my aunt's scornful laugh, and the uneasy exclamations of the old women who were there smoking hookah and discussing the possible offences against the gods which could have brought this calamity upon our house, and upon *them*, for each had received two annas when the poor little girl was born, instead of the more free-handed *bakhshísh* which would have been theirs had another son appeared to rejoice the family.

And I remember, too, that pretty little sister. *I* thought her pretty and nice; and so did my mother, I am sure, though she was, of course, very sad and disappointed to think that the gods had not given her another son rather than this girl, whom no one seemed to want.

For a few hours all was quiet in our house. My father had left me at home all day, and had said that he was not going to the shop, but only to see and consult the Brahman priests on an important matter.

When he returned I could not understand his look. Was he angry or sad? And why did he look at me so sorrowfully as he took some pice from his pocket and bade me go to a rather distant shop and

buy some sweets? However, I went gladly enough, for even in the bitterest and most mysterious hour of a child's life *sweets are sweets!* A little servant-boy, who cooked food when required, or took care of me, or fetched things from the *bázár*, accompanied me on my errand; and in about half-an-hour we returned, enjoying together our feast. But as we entered the small square court which formed the principal part of our house I heard loud cries proceeding from my mother's tiny room, and soon discovered that the little sister who was already installed in my fond imagination as the future sharer of my mirth and welcome partaker of my sweets was nowhere to be found.

I need not enlarge on this subject, brothers. You all know what had happened, and that such scenes *must* have their place in a correct Hindu household. It is not reckoned good to allow too many female children to live, and there would be innumerable social and other difficulties (at least so our teachers say) if prompt measures were not taken in a just proportion of cases. But alas for the mother whose strength of love is unable to save her offspring from such a cruel fate! Alas for the breaking heart of that young creature of less than twenty summers who had seen death already snatch her sons, and who must now, according to the unbending decrees of fate, let go her longing, loving hold of her little daughter's infant life in the hope of

propitiating Shiv, whose angry fiat would not allow her to keep her boys! For what to that young mother is the question of daughter or son? True, *her* honour and that of her family are concerned in her having male children; but let any mother under heaven tell whether one circumstance can intensify a mother's joy *in possession*, or add anything to the poignancy of her grief *in bereavement.* To *hope*, and then to *have*, only to *lose!* To be a mother, knowing all the pain and all the bliss which that word means; to hold that little life for a few short hours in her sheltering, loving bosom, and then to lose it all, and for ever! What could it now matter to her whether the lost treasure had been son or daughter? Therefore, do not be surprised that my poor young mother wept, and refused to be comforted. I was very angry, and as I knew that none could have done this deed without my father's consent, there sprang up in my heart a feeling of shrinking from him, which almost amounted to hatred.

I did not know then how strong had been the pressure brought to bear upon him before he could be persuaded to throw away his little child's life in order to appease the wrath of an angry god.

A few years passed away, and I was going daily to the *bázár*, no longer as a child playing with the pretty toys, but as a growing lad upon whom, as a poor man's son, rested the necessity of working hard for his daily

bread. There were no opportunities in those times for boys like me to get the kind of learning which has since been brought to us by foreigners, and which has made so many changes in our country. Of course, there was learning far greater already stored up in our sacred books, but it was different in itself and different in its object. All that marvellous knowledge of the Great Being from whom our Brahmans can trace their descent, and who ages ago made known to them His will and endued them with His power—*that* knowledge we understand to be an essentially different thing from all the well-taught sciences and arts which can be so easily acquired in the present day, and the key to which can be found in the hands of every student in the many schools and colleges which are so changing, and in some ways benefiting, our country. We cannot but see the advantages which there *are* in the learning of the foreigners, but we should be untrue to our ancient faith if we did not contend that, in spite of all *appearances to the contrary*, it is in the Vedas that man finds the only real knowledge.[1]

From our Brahmans I had learned as much as it was supposed necessary for a boy in my rank of life to know; but I was always longing for something further, and puzzling myself greatly about many questions concern-

[1] Nothing is more astonishing than the unreasoning persistence of heathen philosophers long after they have seen the undeniable advantages of Christian education.

ing which I was sure books, if I could but read them, would have supplied me with most satisfactory answers. I mean no blame to our ancient religion and customs when I say that it is a pity that youths should carry about in their souls a *thirst* which nothing they are conversant with seems at all able to quench. I can describe my own sensation of longing for knowledge at the time of which I speak as nothing else than a great, burning, insatiable *thirst.*

I spoke to my father, but he said that I ought not to indulge such vain fancies, as not for poor brassworkers, but only for Brahman priests, were the treasures of knowledge.

Then I would go down to the River, and standing on its bank in a devout attitude, gaze intently on the holy waters, and sigh for some power of understanding why they had such wondrous efficacy, that even when carried hundreds of miles to distant scenes of misery and death, they never failed in their sacred mission of bringing blessing to man; and if even a small quantity of water from Má Gangá's beneficent streams were duly used in cleansing any mortal just setting forth on that great and awful journey of which we call the first step *death,* he is sure of a safer and swifter passage because absolved from those earthly defilements which, but for this precious gift of Heaven to man, might have brought him into thousands of years of heavy woe, and added no one can tell how much to the

number of his transmigrations, making his miseries before his final perfection in the presence of Brahm almost interminable and unbearable. Then I would cry to Má Gangá, and say, "If these things, O mother! are true, then satisfy me. Just as thou dost not deny thy gentle waters to quench the thirst of any man who drinks here on thy banks, so do thou, if thou canst, satisfy the thirst of my soul!" But, alas! brothers, I remained unsatisfied.

In all my walks and amusements there was no one whom I more delighted to have as a companion than Shiv Jí, my little friend of the fruit-stall; and when we boys were about ten years old a marriage was arranged for me with his sister, whose age was then only seven years. With this arrangement I had, of course, nothing to do, but I was pleased to have Shiv Jí not only as a friend, but as a brother.

To a great extent he sympathised with me in my longings and regrets, and he often advised me to do some extra *pujas* or repeat with more fervour my *mantras*, in the hope that I might get that rest of mind I so greatly desired. He confided to me his own idea, that most of the enjoyments in the world were defiling to the soul of man, and purposely allowed to be so by the gods, in order to make the absolute purity and perfection of its ultimate condition all the more marvellous by reason of its present vileness; and that

that ultimate condition of purity was entirely dependent upon man's efforts and pains during his time of probation in the different scenes in which he might be placed in the course of all the transmigrations of the soul. Although I did not always agree with Shiv Jí in the various ideas which he brought forward as he learnt them from different philosophers at different times, I nevertheless carefully observed all religious duties even to his satisfaction, and he not infrequently applauded me as one who spared no pains to bring himself to the perfection demanded of mortals who would ever be absorbed into the very essence of Brahm. But for me there was not any satisfaction. Perhaps you will wonder why I had such a thirst in my soul. At first it was only a desire for knowledge of any kind, but soon it grew into a great longing to know something of the Mighty Creator, and to escape the curse of evil, which (though I did not all at once understand this) is the cause of all the misery in the world.

In my many reflections about the River and the Golden Temple, the deities, the offerings, the various forms of *puja*, and the teachings of the Brahmans, I was ever conscious of this great, unsatisfied craving, and ever aware, too, of the retention in my memory of one dark, terrible day in the little history of my life, which could not fail to make a fearful background to all my imaginings and questions—I mean the day

when I heard for the first and last time the wail of my infant sister.

A time came when still further my wondering and troubled heart was to be puzzled. The cholera visited our city with unusual severity. At first there were only a few cases of death from this dreaded foe, and by the thoughtful and experienced they were understood as are the first drops and mutterings of a thunderstorm. But many said it would be no worse than in other years, that always we must have some deaths in so large and populous a city from this terrible disease, and that this season would prove no exception to the rule. But the calamity increased, and people ceased to say it was nothing. Shops were closed and *bázárs* became more quiet, and devout citizens were more diligent in their *pujas* and their offerings; while homes were being made more and more desolate, and the hot, stifling, sickening air seemed full of sounds of death, as every day some two hundred of the bodies of our fellow-beings were carried forth for burial or for burning.

My father and my young child-wife were soon reckoned among the dead, and then came the darkest hour in all my history. How can I even think of it without opening afresh the wounds in my heart, which have never really healed? My mother, still my best-beloved companion—she who, in her idolising affection for me, would do or bear anything for my sake; she

who, in all our two young lives since my birth, had found in loving and tending and playing with her first-born son her sweetest solace and joy—*she* was brought in the sad procession when my father's body was carried forth for burning; and there, when all the dread arrangements had been duly made, and my uncle, nearest relative of the dead, was standing ready to perform the terrible deeds required of him, she—still young, and to my loving eyes how beautiful!—was bound upon that funeral pyre, and without a word or struggle that I knew of, gave up, in calm obedience to an ancient custom, her life in the unspeakable agony of that blazing bed of death.

Ask not into whose fearfully trembling and almost unconscious hands they thrust at least one torch to light that fire. Rather wonder that I live to bear this weight of years, and with that scene of anguish all fresh before me still to tell the tale as if it were a thing of yesterday.

I fled the spot; and in all the trouble and misery which were upon our city, none of my family cared, I suppose, to inquire for me. Afterwards I learned that Shiv Jí and my uncles thought, when two or three days had passed without my coming home, that I had died suddenly, like hundreds more, all untended and alone, by some wayside or in some jungle, having fled the city with disease and death upon me. So they never thought of following or searching; and I, full of bitter

anguish and sorrow, scarce knowing what I did or whither my footsteps turned, left my childhood's home for ever.

In the madness of despair I did it, and not then with any hope in my stricken heart of finding the satisfaction and rest for which I had so long yearned in vain.

You ask me how I lived. I saw that I could not earn my bread unless I did so by means of the only trade of which I was master, and that this was not possible while I held to my desire to increase my little store of knowledge. I hastily took a resolution, and adopted the dress of a *faqír*, and then, with my wallet and staff, set forth on the pilgrimage which is not yet ended.

Forty-five long years have passed away since I left the plague-stricken city which had been my home, but I have not yet found that in search of which I started. The Great Unknown, the Almighty Creator of our spirits, alone sees whether the prize of satisfaction is ever to be mine.

I was fifteen years of age, and at first I bore well the hardships of my new life. I walked from city to city, thinking lightly of heat and cold, of hunger and fatigue, for my spirit was athirst, and its cravings were more painful than any which can be felt by the body. I visited every pípal and every banyan tree which had become famous as the special resort of holy men, and

beneath whose chosen shade miracles of healing and other wonders had been wrought.

Devoutly I worshipped and waited under those sacred branches, and longed for sign of help and comfort from the deities known to be pleased to dwell in such leafy temples.

I journeyed with oft-weary yet ever-willing feet to Calcutta, that I might there take part in all the ceremonies and join in the grand procession with Jaggarnáth's car; and again these same tired limbs bore me to Cashmír, and thence to the source of the wonderful river Chenáb, where, with strong and earnest hope, I worshipped and admired; and from that favoured and blessed spot I pursued my way again until I reached on another and distant part of these glorious mountains, Dharmsála and Juwálamukhi, and witnessed the burning mountain, and once more adored and longed for the knowledge of the Great Spirit. But fire no more revealed Him to me than the holy welling-up spring of water had done, and anon I turned, as so often before, to Má Gangá, and visited anew every sacred spot on her banks.

During all these pilgrimages I spent many days and nights in sitting at the feet of holy *faqírs*, listening to and learning from them how they had given up the world and gone to live alone in poverty and suffering in order that they might mortify the flesh and hold communion with the Great Spirit, and be purified and

refined, and finally absorbed into His very essence. I worshipped these men. I knew they were sincere and pure, and it was my dire misfortune, or rather, perhaps, my miserable fault—who knows?—that I could never find in all their teaching anything that could satisfy my soul. It would often happen that just at sunset I reached the outskirts of some sacred city near to which I knew there lived, by a holy well and under some famous pípal's shade, a *faqír* of great repute for his sanctity, and I would, with reverent posture, approach his little hut, and gazing on him with becoming humility and admiration, say, "Master, behold an unworthy servant!" Then he would ask me concerning my condition and circumstances, my name and age, my desires and intentions, and encourage me to talk with him of all the great longings of my soul; and when aware that he had crouching before him a humble but earnest searcher for peace and satisfaction, he would become absorbed in thought, so that it was easily seen that he was holding communion with the Great Spirit. I would wait then in awe-struck silence until he should again begin to speak, sometimes in low, quiet tones, as if rather to himself than to any other, and sometimes in rapturous ecstasies, with many exclamations of wonder and many profound prostrations of his whole body on the earth; and anon in earnest, solemn words he would exhort me to seek to hold communion with the All-Pure,

to be absolutely holy in word and deed and thought, to have no earthly desires, to neglect and afflict my body, to make long pilgrimages, to *strive* after the knowledge of good, and to live in hope that at some time or other I should be absorbed into the very essence of Brahm.

And I would stay with him for two or three days, listening to his wisdom and striving to understand, and then I would go forth once more upon my lonely pilgrimage to try perfectly to obey the precepts of such a master, but always to find myself only plunged into deeper despair and more intense dissatisfaction.

In the course of my wanderings I often visited Benares; indeed, my religious duties and convictions made this necessary, and I never failed to go to my old home to seek interviews with those of my relatives who were living still. But to none of them did my heart truly turn save to my brother-in-law, Shiv Jí, who was always the one to give me a welcome, and to encourage me in the pursuit of holiness and truth.

We were full-grown men, and he was thriving in worldly matters, having become a wood-merchant[1] and abandoned the far less lucrative trade of his father, when I arrived one evening at his house, as I had

[1] In large cities, where there are many Hindus, the wood-trade is a good one, on account of the consumption of wood at the burning *ghâts*.

often done before, and received, after my long, weary tramp from my last halting-place, his usual kind welcome.

It was an agreement between us that I should always act in his house just as any other *faqír* would do, and accepting from his hands any alms or food he might give, should carefully avoid any recognition of the rights which would have been mine as brother in his household had I not chosen the life of a religious devotee. Thus I always remained in the outside court, and lay at night on the floor of a tiny room there which just admitted me, and in which I could suitably carry on all my religious exercises. Shiv Jí usually came and sat in this outside court with me for long and serious conversation, for he took a very true interest in the great object of my life, and would always do everything he could to encourage and help me.

On the particular evening of which I am speaking I could not help noticing something strange in my brother-in-law's manner.

He was grave and quiet, scarcely replying to any question, and apparently entirely taken up with some subject of thought of a most serious nature. At length he suddenly asked, "Well, brother, is your soul's thirst quenched?" I was obliged to tell him, in answer, that, alas! thus far my wanderings and searchings had been in vain, and that I still craved the know-

ledge of the way to perfect purity and absorption into the very essence of Brahm.

After a long thoughtful pause Shiv Jí said, "Brother, the perplexities and doubts of these days are much increased by the establishment in our midst of a new sort of religion, whose teachers have come from a far-distant land, claiming to be the fortunate possessors of a secret which shall supersede all previously known methods of finding God and happiness, and shall reveal Him not alone to men of one class or race or country, but to every one in the whole world who may be found willing to adopt their religious customs. Do you think there can be any truth in such an idea?"

This new religion was not altogether unheard of by me, as it had been discussed among our teachers many years before; but since its advocates had been more diligent in pushing forward its supposed claims, and in urging persons of other religions to give heed to them, it had appeared in some of our cities almost as a new thing.

Yes; I understood what he meant. He was certainly speaking of the religion of the English.

I was surprised that *he*, a good, thoughtful, and devout Hindu, should even *speak* of such a strange and unreasonable mode of religious thought as that brought before us by the foreigners, and I answered him somewhat angrily, that I hoped he was not going to be

such a fool as to lend his ear to the absurd tales of Karánís.[1]

He replied by merely asking, "Brother, where is its absurdity? Can you prove it?"

I was more astonished now, and rather ironically inquired, "Oh, then you mean to turn Karání yourself? Do you know of any one thing in the book of the foreigners which would not be deserving of the condemnation of our priests, or which could possibly find one moment's favour with our devoted and holy *faqírs?*—all honour to their sanctity and learning."

He then showed me a small book, and said, "This is a portion of the book of the English. I am not showing it to you because I believe it or am at all convinced about any statements contained in it, but only because you are devoted to a life of holiness and self-abasement in the grand hope of finding God, and surely your wisdom and religious character entitle you to judge of such books as this? Read this one passage," and he pointed. The little book was in Hindi, and I had learned to read that language during my visits to different holy and learned men; so I now read easily as follows:—

"Jesus said unto her, If thou knewest the gift of God, and who it is that saith to thee, Give Me to drink, thou wouldest have asked of Him, and He would have

[1] A derisive name for Christians.

given thee living water. The woman saith unto Him, Sir, Thou hast nothing to draw with, and the well is deep: from whence then hast Thou that living water? Art Thou greater than our father Jacob, which gave us the well, and drank thereof himself, and his children, and his cattle? Jesus answered and said unto her, Whosoever drinketh of this water shall thirst again: but whosoever drinketh of the water that I shall give him shall never thirst; but the water that I shall give him shall be in him a well of water springing up into everlasting life."

I was not at all pleased with the apparent satisfaction with which Shiv Jí heard me read these words, though they had even to me a certain charm which made me almost long to read them again. I laid down the book, and began to mock my brother, and deride his weakness in that so readily he had listened to the nonsense called by foreigners *truth!*

He only replied, "Be not so angry, my brother. I have only shown you, in your inquiries after knowledge, what *some* teachers say is the right way. *I* am no teacher, nor can I decide questions only rightly discussed by priests and devotees."

He went to his evening meal, and the usual alms having been dispensed to me, I gathered up my wallet and staff, and then, just at the last moment, decided on taking also the little book, in order that I might have the opportunity to answer its arguments and ex-

pose the mistakes of its teaching; and forth I went again upon my weary journey.

Twenty years have passed since *that* day; but as yet I have not fully satisfied myself as to the answers I shall frame to the words of that book, and sometimes I thing it may be better if I leave the important task to a wiser and holier man.

As for my brother-in-law, I much fear that he must have left his own and his forefathers' holy religion, and joined himself to that which seems to have gained such a strange hold on the minds of our people, the so-called "religion" of the English; for he left our ancient city soon after the interview which I have recorded, and beyond unsatisfactory rumours of his having changed his dress and some of his customs, I could never hear anything about him.

Oh that even yet I may again meet the friend of my childhood, the brother of my maturer years! May the All-wise One answer this yearning prayer! And now I am returning from what I know must prove my last visits to sacred spots on these mountains and among these forest-trees; I must travel by such short stages as best may suit the weary limbs of the tired old man.

I am receiving from the faithful and charitable much blessed help by the way (God bless them!), and I am cherishing the hope in my heart that I may once more worship near the sacred tanks and under the pípal-

trees of Lahore and Amritsar before my long, long journey ends for ever in this world and I pass the gate at the entrance of that other journey, so utterly unknown to us mortals, the afflictions and burdens of which, as well as its alleviations and mitigations of wrath, and its thousands of years of length, will all be determined by the degree of acceptance with the Great Spirit of all the toils, sorrows, privations, and devotions of these sixty years.

Farewell, my brothers. *Salám! salám!* Let us thank Him that in all His rewards and punishments He is just.

The old man had risen, and as he spoke the name of the Great Spirit, the All-Just, he reverently bowed his head, and with his fine thoughtful old face betokening by every pain-drawn line on its rugged surface the truth of his sad tale, he gathered up his wallet and staff and passed away from the group of listeners, to pursue his weary journey down the winding hill-side road; not, however, without first stooping for one more draught of that pure, sparkling, refreshing water.

As he felt its thirst-quenching power, did it speak no word to him, nor bring to his restless, thirsty soul the solemn thought that even yet, within the folds of his *faqír's* cloth, there lay a little book which had been

telling him unheeded through twenty years of struggle and of toil—

"WHOSOEVER DRINKETH OF THE WATER THAT I SHALL GIVE HIM SHALL NEVER THIRST; BUT THE WATER THAT I SHALL GIVE HIM SHALL BE IN HIM A WELL OF WATER SPRINGING UP INTO EVERLASTING LIFE."

CHAPTER III.

THE SCHOOLMASTER'S DILEMMA.

Shall one who names
The Name of Christ take part with enemies
Of that dear Name! fear to proclaim His love!
Forbear to tell it out among the heathen
That the Lord is King! Alas! 'tis even so.
Is not the reason plain? That now no more
Nor *Shiv*, nor *Káli*, nor the great *Ganesh*
Doth claim his homage or command his powers,
But in the place of all there reigns supreme
The idol Self!

MOHINDRÁNÁTH CHAKKARBATTY was strolling leisurely along the narrow *bázár* of a not very important country town in the Panjáb. He was returning home from his daily toil of educating the youth of Akbarpur, and he looked by no means sorry to leave for a few hours the comparatively imposing building which bore the words over its doorway, in letters moulded in *pacca plaster*—"Government College, 1878." He was tired. Who wouldn't be tired after such a day's work and in such a climate!

True, the *pankah*, which had been an actual necessity of life that day to the exhausted and weary native master and scholars packed in that schoolroom, had been pulled unceasingly after a fashion, but never-

theless it had been a struggle, and a hard one, to get through the day. Possibly critics who judge of the plains of India and the circumstances of those whose work happens to be there *all the year round*, by the pleasant coolness and fresh and fruitful appearance of Nature in the time of their delightful winter visit to hospitable friends, would exclaim, "What! a *pankah!* Surely such an extravagant luxury cannot be required, and by natives, too!" But the day on which we make the acquaintance of Bábu Mohindránáth Chakkarbatty is a day when such visitors are conspicuous by their absence, having somehow or another found out, that although in November and December it is difficult to imagine why the Panjáb climate is considered so trying, still it is decidedly wise not to make the experiment of waiting to see what June and July may be like, but to leave room at such times for "those who like the warmth."[1]

Yes, it *was* a hot day, and every one knew it, and had known it for a good many hours; yet still each pedestrian in those stifling, airless *bázárs* seemed to feel it necessary to tell every one he met that it was a season of much heat, and that he had almost died of it last night, and had never known such affliction on account of heat since he had lived in Akbarpur.

[1] It would be well if it could be an established rule that no visitor to the Panjáb should be qualified to give an opinion of its climate until he had remained on its plains for twelve months consecutively.

Mohindránáth Chakkarbatty was not a native of Akbarpur, but he had many acquaintances there. As Government schoolmaster he was in a position which entitled him to respect, and many were the *saláms* made to him by his fellow-townsfolk as he threaded his way along the crowded *bázár*, for he had always been careful to do nothing to turn away from himself and his family that regard which might, unrealised, as in the case of many others, have been his rightful due. But his circle of special friends was a small one, and he was perfectly satisfied to have the respect of the multitude and the love of the few, there being many things in his character and tastes which made him inclined to keep somewhat aloof from ordinary company in a Panjábi country town, and to maintain as much as possible what he felt to be *the dignity of a Bengali Bábu.* He was, therefore, by no means unlike hundreds of his fellow-men in every part of the world whose mental vision is impaired.

In the case of Mohindránáth there was yet another resemblance to crowds of well-meaning people elsewhere; he was perfectly certain the reason that his circle of close friends was small, and that, although his fair dealing and scholastic powers won *respect*, he was never overwhelmed with expressions or tokens of *love*, was the fact of his being a Christian. Now, this he felt was in no way his fault, and he sometimes even ventured to assure his few chosen friends that

he was not animated by those proselytising notions which had already made some Government schools in danger of being unpopular, owing to the foolish persistence of Christian masters in propagating new doctrines, and that they might always feel, in trusting their boys to his care and tuition, that the sacredness and authority of the ancient religions of the people should be maintained, and every boy left to worship God in the way he pleased, undisturbed by any introduction of new creeds.

Mohindránáth had one good and kind friend who had been to him from early boyhood a very brother, in school-days seeking to guide him aright, and in manhood fearlessly showing him his errors and dangers, while striving earnestly to lead him to the one and only safe position for the Christian—"*on the Lord's side.*" For Philip Muhkam Dín had chosen the better part, and was known as one who, through evil report and good report, counted it his greatest happiness and highest honour to be enabled to be loyal to his Heavenly Master, and it was ever with a sense of deep pain that he heard that Blessed Name by which he was known disgraced by being called the cause of the contempt and hatred which were really the rightful due of the cowardice and worldliness of many who took shelter under the notion that they were hated for their Christianity.

Philip Muhkam Dín was also a Government school-

master, and he had more than once been stationed in a town in which Mohindránáth had been for a time on duty, such constant changes being common in Government service of this kind. The friends met but seldom, for duties were heavy, and leave of absence for three or four days at a time not easy to obtain, while the frequent public holidays on the occasion of religious feasts, *melas*, &c., afforded too short a time for a journey of many hours to visit a distant station. But the friends did meet sometimes, and for the last eighteen years a new tie had bound them more closely, for Philip Muhkam Dín's sister, on leaving the large Mission boarding-school where she had been educated, became the wife of Mohindránáth Chakkarbatty. We shall meet her again, and will find that, with her heart truly given to God, and her place of loving consecration at the Master's feet never deserted for any worldly gain or pleasure, she is able to maintain in her difficult position a character and an influence which speak well for the school from which she comes and rejoice the heart of her like-minded brother.

On the sultry evening in June on which we were introduced to Mohindránáth Chakkarbatty, he was apparently in a very thoughtful and disturbed state of mind; he looked worried and annoyed, and something more than fatigue and the heat of the season seemed to make him tread so wearily towards his home. He lived in a neat little house near the Mis-

sion Church in Akbarpur, and had almost reached his destination, when he suddenly turned back, and hastily traversing again one or two *bázárs*, made his way up a narrow *galli* leading out of the chief street of the town. "It will be as well," he said to himself, "just to let them see that I am not to blame; but it is certainly most annoying that this affair should have happened, and it is so likely to *bring discredit on the Mission.*" Ah! if Mohindránáth would only have listened to the voice within, the faithful monitor not always altogether silent about his faults, he would have heard a word about *a negative Christianity* and *a non-aggressive Christian bringing discredit on the Master.*

But he hurried on and heeded not the whisper of conscience. His friend, Prem Chand, the goldsmith, towards whose house he was hastening, had not yet returned from his shop, and a lad in the *galli* who gave Mohindránáth this information undertook to go and call him.

The schoolmaster walked on and sat down on a *chárpaie* in the entrance of the house, and just at the top of a few steps leading up from the *galli* to the house.

Two men and a youth, already sitting on that and another *chárpaie*, gave him rather surly *saláms*, and one of them not very willingly made room for him to sit down.

"*Salám ji*," said the schoolmaster to Rattan Chand,

the goldsmith's brother; "how is Nihál Chand's father?" (meaning the goldsmith).

Rattan Chand replied that his brother was just coming home, and Mohindránáth could see for himself that the life and joy of his life were departed, his strength and happiness gone for ever, and his heart broken.

Mohindránáth began to say, in a feeble, hesitating way, "But surely there is hope that Muhkam Chand——"

"Name him not!" almost fiercely cried the uncle of the boy on whose behalf a whole family of Hindus were mourning more than they would if he had been dead, a Christian schoolmaster was fretting and trembling for his own honour, and the Lord's words were being fulfilled in the glorious unseen world, "There is joy in the presence of the angels of God over one sinner that repenteth." Yes, Muhkam Chand had within the last twenty-four hours renounced the errors and superstitions of his own false religion, and joined himself unto the people of the God of Abraham.

"All very well," thought Mohindránáth when he heard of it. "I am, of course, thankful that people should become Christians—I hope many may; but it *is* a misfortune that this should have happened just as it has. If the lad would only have been cautious, and remained a secret believer until he could come

out without trouble and fuss, how very much better it would have been! I dare say some impulsive Christian has been teaching him that he must come boldly forward and confess all he feels at once. Such a pity! There is nothing gained by it, and it only provokes opposition and makes it so difficult to keep open schools. It is the same sort of uncalled-for boldness which has made so many persecutions and afflictions come upon Christians in other countries. Why, if every one in England in the reign of their famously wicked Queen Mary had thought as *I* do——"

An interruption brought the schoolmaster's soliloquy to an abrupt end, but we can easily guess that the conclusion might have been, "Smithfield fires would not have been a blot on the page of English history."

The goldsmith came home at length, and Mohindránáth advanced with a sympathetic smile to meet him; but Prem Chand, seating himself by his brothers, broke out into a passion of grief, and reproached the schoolmaster as being an unworthy and deceitful friend. Did he not know that no worse disaster than this under which they were now groaning could possibly fall upon a Hindu family of such strict religious principles as theirs? Were they not for ever disgraced and in danger of losing caste, and had they not lost one of the most hopeful and affectionate of sons? Might not, for all they knew, the same evil seeds have been sown in the hearts of other Hindu lads,

and would it not, probably, soon become a matter of common observation that Brahman boys who attended that school were no longer so devout in their observance of *puja* and other religious customs?

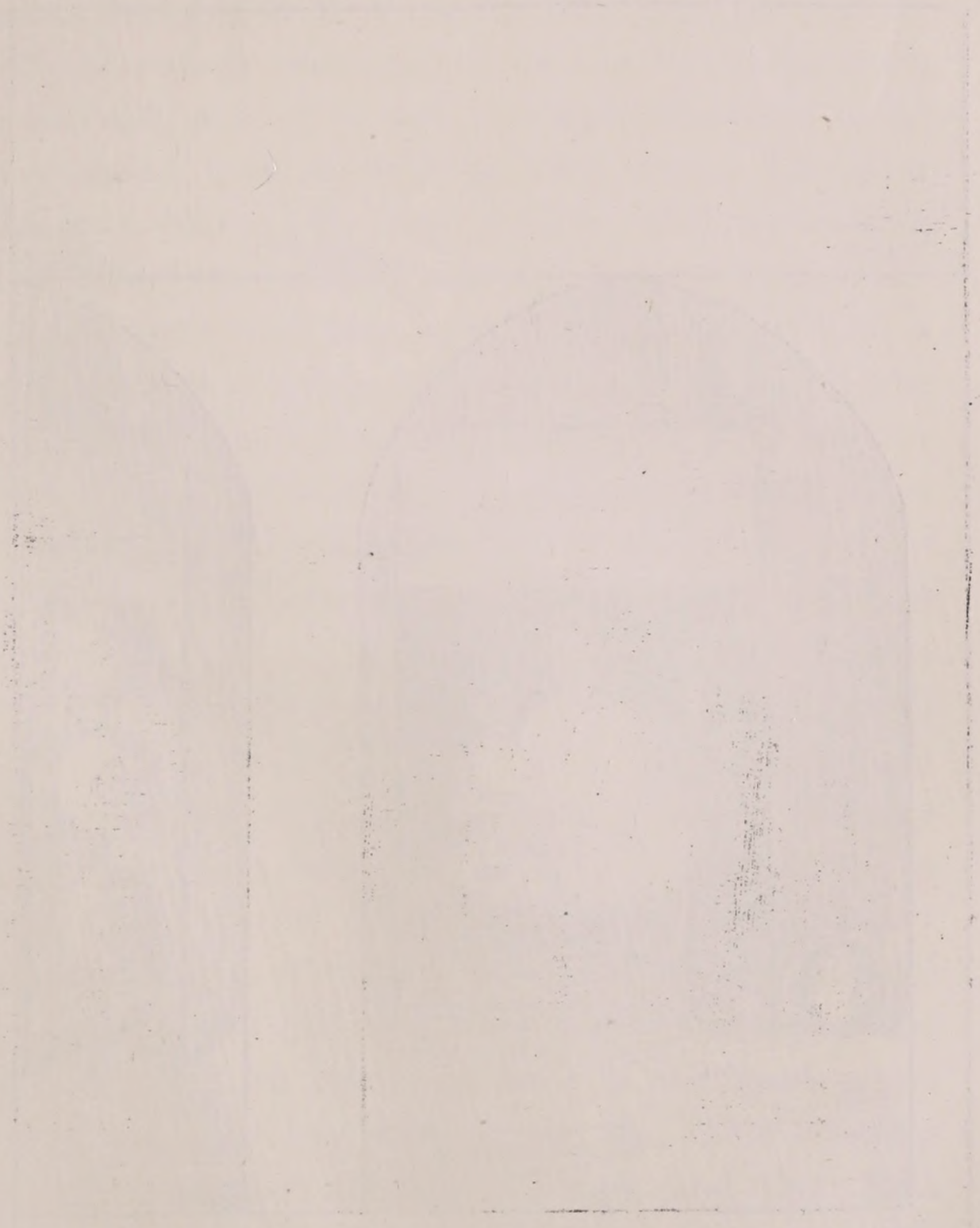
But the schoolmaster hastened to assure his friends that he felt very much sympathy for them in their trouble, and that, although he certainly, as a Christian, held the Bible to be true, yet still he hoped he was too honourable to use any special effort to lead his scholars to read it; and, besides, did they not know that in Government schools Bible-teaching and proselytising were forbidden by a most wise law?

Having to some extent made peace with his friends, Mohindránáth went off home, feeling a little more at ease as to any possible danger to himself from this conversion of young Muhkam Chand; and he even persuaded himself that he had done Christianity *in general*, and the Mission, in which he had several friends, *in particular*, a very good turn "by letting these respectable Hindus see that it is not the object of Christians to upset their homes and take away their sons."

He soon reached home, and pushed open the door in the wall surrounding his neatly paved and tidily kept court, where his two young daughters were busily employed in the little cook-house on one side preparing some tasty Bengali dish for their father's evening meal. They were assisted by a woman-servant,

who, having just been out on an errand to the *bázár*, had hastened back with the news that the Bábu was coming. The girls greeted him affectionately, and told him they would soon bring him a nice supper. It was one of their wise mother's rules to bring up her girls to love work and never to know the silly pride which prevents so many modern girls (even among Christians in India, too!) from being any comfort and help to their own parents in their own homes, and consequently makes it exceedingly difficult for the Christian man of moderate means to marry any educated girl. These two were accustomed, whenever at home from school, to think it a pleasure and an honour to be allowed to cook for father and help mother; and they found, as many other sensible girls have done, that a good education need not be incompatible with the accomplishments essential in the good housewife. The Bábu returned their greeting and hurried into the house. What was it which was so attracting him there? Listen! A child's fresh young voice trilling out in clear, full notes the words—

"I've found a Friend; oh, such a Friend!
He loved me ere I knew Him;
He drew me with the cords of love,
And thus He bound me to Him.
And round my heart still closely twine
Those ties which nought can sever;
For I am His, and He is mine,
For ever and for ever!"



"They sat together on a low *chárpaie* for their usual evening enjoyment of each other."—*Page* 47.

On the approach of the Bábu the child ceased singing, and began to listen in that peculiar manner which always at once acquaints the bystander with the fact that this is a case in which ears have to do the work of eyes as well as their own. The dear child was blind. He was a little, delicate-looking lad of about ten years of age, and he had been blind from his birth, and very weakly all his life. With a cry of joy and a spring towards his father which was so utterly devoid of the fear of taking a wrong direction or meeting with an accident that it seemed for the moment as if the child *could* not be blind, he was giving the schoolmaster the usual evening welcome home.

"And what has this little boy been doing all day?" asked Mohindránáth.

This was the regularly repeated question, and the Bábu always felt rested and happy as he listened to the history of the day's little doings and amusements which it elicited. He was tenderly fond of this blind child, his only son; and nothing was too trifling or childish to appear to him worthy of praise if only his dear boy said or did it. This evening the little face looked gravely happy, and there was not much to say about play; but with an old-fashioned, earnest look the boy nestled closer to his father as they sat together on a low *chárpaie* for their usual evening enjoyment of each other, and

the little childish voice was very sweet and calm as the words came, "Father, to-day I have been hearing and thinking a great deal about the boy who came here with the old *faqír*—the boy who was so clever at school, and loved learning so very much he has sometimes been known to say that everything he had learnt had seemed like a *lota* full of fresh water from a mountain stream, it made him long to get some more. And now, dear father, he has learnt the best thing of all; he has learnt about Jesus; he has become a Christian. Only he isn't baptized yet, but he will be soon."

Little David spoke earnestly, and did not notice his father's silence as he prattled on. Well was it that he could not see at that moment his father's annoyed expression of countenance as he enlarged on the happiness of the "new Christian boy," and told how he was at a neighbour's house, and he (David) had been to see him to-day when out in the early morning for a walk with the servant-boy who took care of him. David came to a pause at last, after exclaiming, "And how delightful for a boy of father's school to become a Christian!"

"And have you forgotten, my little David, that it will be a very bad thing for father, because now all the people will be afraid to send their boys to the Government school, as they will certainly think that I converted him to Christianity?"

"Oh no, father!" exclaimed the eager child; "they won't, I promise you they won't! Muhkam Chand began to love Jesus only through reading the Gospel of St. Luke, so you see no one will blame you."

"Yes, yes," said the schoolmaster, "I know that, child; but don't you see how bad a name it will be for me, so that respectable Hindu friends will really scarcely trust me again with their sons, lest they should be taught to be Christians. And you would not like to hear of your father's bad name, would you, my little David?"

A sad, grave look came over the face of the blind child as he slowly answered, "I like people to praise *you*, dear father, but I am only wondering what our Father in heaven will say."

The Bábu was glad indeed of the interruption caused by preparations for the evening meal, and hoped that for to-night at least the topic of the conversion of the boy in the Government school would be left alone. But yet once more before he lay down to rest that night the erring servant was spoken to by the Master; for when the family had been for a little time sitting together under a *pankah* put up expressly for these hot evenings in the open air, and when the meal was ended, little David suddenly broke the silence by speaking to his mother —a quiet, gentle woman, with a happy face which

told of inward peace, and which seemed to show the secret of the cheerful industry of those young girls and the simple trust of the blind child, upon whom a mother's influence had been exerted "all for Christ."

"Mother," asked little David, with a wistful, earnest look, "now that boy will be a Christian, why should it be a bad name for father?"

Mohindránáth's wife often found herself placed in difficulty like this from the simple impossibility of telling the truth without blaming her husband, to whom her high Christian principle made her ever loyal, and whose authority as a father she ever strove to uphold. Often before had she felt sure that Mohindránáth was taking the wrong side, or at least shrinking in a cowardly way from taking the right one, when the vexed question came before him of whether or not Christians in India ought to try to persuade the heathen to believe and turn to the Lord. Without appearing to her children to contradict their father, she now only explained, "I do not think any really good people will give the school or the schoolmaster a bad name from which a boy becomes a Christian; and if we really love Christ ourselves, it seems impossible to me *not* to bring others to Him. It is nothing to us what people will say, and we need not trouble about the bad name; we *must* bring other people to know the happiness of being Christians; it is the natural result

of being Christians ourselves. Our Blessed Lord said—

"'HE THAT BELIEVETH ON ME, AS THE SCRIPTURE HATH SAID, OUT OF HIS BELLY SHALL FLOW RIVERS OF LIVING WATER.'"

CHAPTER IV.

THE GOLDSMITH'S SON.

Sown in weakness
On a long weary day, when oft the heart—
Supported though it be by faith, made strong
By prayer—sinks sadly down and almost feels
Love's labour lost, and all that precious seed
Gone to the winds, consumed by heat and drought,
Hopelessly lost, to yield no glorious fruit
At the great Harvest-Day! Nay, labourer, pause
Yet once again, and pray, "Lord of the field,
Bless *this*, and *this*, and *this*, in weakness sown,
For the Great Intercessor's sake alone. Amen."
If *He* but bless, each *grain* will erewhile yield
A *harvest* for His praise! Be of good cheer;
Thou yet shalt see the seed now sown in weakness
Raised in power.

MUHKAM CHAND, concerning whose conversion to the Christian faith our friend Mohindránáth, the schoolmaster, was so anxious and alarmed lest a bad name should be attached to the Government school in consequence of it, had been the dearly-loved and much-indulged younger son in the goldsmith's family, and had lived the usual not very eventful life of such Hindu lads in quiet country towns in the Panjáb. In early childhood he lived chiefly in the women's rooms, to be played with, petted and spoilt

as much as possible, given everything he cried for, and allowed to make every one his slave.

There is really no nursery-life for the children of India; indeed, it may almost be said there is no childhood there.

Often has the heart of the lady missionary ached over these babes, toddling along in the narrow *gallis*, with their old-men faces showing all too plainly that the knowledge of evil, the practice of cunning, and the habit of deliberate lying have all too rapidly carried these still mere infants over the period known to us as "childhood," and launched them on to the sea of human life at the deep-water and dangerous-rock point which is not reached by the well-guarded youth of Christian lands until an age at which his young brother of India has become old in iniquity.

Prem Chand, the goldsmith, was very proud of his two fine sons. Boys are always much coveted in Indian families, and are as joyously welcomed as girls are unfavourably regarded. Prem Chand had three daughters before any son came to make up for such a series of disappointments, and as time after time the eager expectation of himself and his brothers was only excited to be dashed to the ground, he began to feel convinced that it was not the will of the gods for him to be the possessor of that great and inestimable blessing, a son of his own.

Of course, he really considered himself childless,[1] for it is customary, when answering the question as to the number of any woman's children, to count up only the boys; and it is only when much pressed that they will acknowledge, with manifest reluctance, "Oh yes, there were two or three girls, to be sure, but we did not know you were asking about *them*."

To Prem Chand's wife the sorrow was perhaps, in some ways, greater than to himself; for, in addition to the trial of having no son, she had to endure the ever-increasing dread, the haunting fear, that sooner or later there would be a second wife in the house, and she herself, with her despised daughters, would have to submit to the life-long sorrow of being set aside for one towards whom the gods might perchance be more favourable. Oh miserable folly, superstition, and sin, when shall the blessed Gospel shine into these dark places of the earth, these travesties of *homes?* How long it seems ere any appreciable difference is made in these absurd and embittering and peace-destroying customs! But, thank God! the light is breaking in, and we look for a time, not far distant, when the right-minded and thoughtful Hindustani or Panjábi shall revert in thought from the happy domestic scenes of a brighter and purer era and feel amazement at

[1] The Panjábi word for son is *putha*, from the Sanscrit root *puth*—preventing from being childless.

the *slavery to customs* under which his forefathers dwelt. When once the slave-chain is broken the freedom will be splendid, if only it be "the liberty wherewith Christ hath made us free." Any scheme for social reform which is not based on Gospel principles will fail. In the vast country, or rather collection of countries which we call India, system after system of philosophy has had its rise and fall, and we may say that nearly everything which has been tried in the solution of the mighty problems, social and otherwise, of these millions of people has been found perfectly valueless, *with the single exception of the Gospel of the grace of God.* Wherever that has been tried, it has proved simply omnipotent. Alas that it has been tried so little! But thank God for its onward progress! Glory to His Name that we can tell of it as "conquering and to conquer"!

From our digression we return to the as good as childless home of Prem Chand, the goldsmith.

At length the brothers and friends who grieved with him in his disappointments are gratified, after a night of anxiety and alternate hope and fear, by the never-to-be-forgotten news, carried very eagerly and with shrill voices by various members of the feminine crowd in one of the inner rooms—"Prem Chand! Prem Chand! see thy blessing and joy this day granted by the Great Creator! Thou art a father;

thy first-born son is come;" while amid the many expressions of congratulation heard on all sides there might be caught the sound from not a few of the more devout of the oft-repeated "*Sir-i-Rám, Sir-i-Rám.*" All the usual ceremonies were gone through, and every rite duly performed on its prescribed day in the little hero's life. First of all came the Brahmans and wrote his *janam patri*, a document recording the day and hour of birth, and professing to foretell certain great events in the boy's life. If any heavy trouble is predicted, the parents are directed to do *puja* to some god with a view to averting wrath, and a chain (for which, of course, the Brahmans have to be paid) is placed on the child's neck as a charm against such trouble, and called *Chandar máli*, or *Suraj máli*, or *Saníchar máli*, according to the particular deity whose wrath has to be averted.

On the fifth day after the birth the mother bathed, and rice was cooked and eaten by all the family and relations. On that night she was so fortunate as to see the stars, after which she was allowed to sleep on a *chárpaie* instead of on the ground, as she had done up to that time. On the thirteenth day the little boy wore a *kurtá* for the first time in his life, and in the evening his mother carried him to a well and did *puja* to it, and presented her little son as an offering to the well.

And there were many more customs all duly observed in the early life of this Hindu child, most of them exceedingly foolish and superstitious. After forty days the mother bathed again, and money was given to every relation and connection of the family.

When the child was about three years old his first hair was cut off, and when he was seven he went through the ceremony of receiving his *janu*, from which time he was reckoned among the "twice-born." Within a few months from that time he was engaged, and shortly afterwards married, every epoch of his young life being marked by the performance of some absurd rite. No expense was ever spared, for there was no lack of money in the goldsmith's family, though no doubt a casual observer of his house, and especially of the comfortless and often dirty apartments of the women, would perhaps have judged him poor. This is one of the anomalies to which one gets quite accustomed after a long residence among the middle-class Hindus and Mohammedans of a great Indian city.

The little fellow, who had received so hearty a welcome, and who had brought so much happiness into the goldsmith's home, was soon in a fair way to being completely spoiled and made into every one's tyrant, though each warned all the others not to spoil the boy, and the women were quite agreed that Prem Chand was the only person who over-

indulged him; while Prem Chand, for his part, declared that, what with the attentions of a maternal great-grandmother and a paternal grandmother, besides two widowed aunts, three uncles' wives, three little sisters, and a doting mother, to say nothing of one or two old *daies* who lavished upon him all the admiring epithets of the almost inexhaustible vocabulary at the command of every Eastern mind, he never knew a boy more unlikely to learn obedience or to be any good in the world.

But little Nihál Chand's time of supreme rule in the household drew rapidly to an end, and one day, when he was not yet three years old, he was roused from sleep to be told the important news that he had a little brother.

Now indeed the goldsmith felt himself a rich and happy man, and his wife forgot all her old fears, and could rejoice in her title of "the mother of Nihál Chand" or "the mother of Muhkam Chand." Her two fine boys grew apace, and became very fond of each other, the younger unconsciously saving the elder from being "spoilt," and the elder finding incessant amusement and delight in all that concerned his funny little brother. Nihál Chand was, of course, the first, as years went on, to go to the Government school as a day scholar, and he was already making some progress in his studies, when there came for him the very happy day on which

he first introduced to the most junior form his young brother, over whom he watched with a love and care which, indeed, rendered quite superfluous the numberless injunctions daily received during the first few weeks of the experiment from the proud father, as well as from the excited and anxious women, who, with many tears, saw the school-going begin, and who could only comfort themselves by preparing for those boys against their return home in the evening plentiful supplies of sweetmeats and *piláo*.

During the few years which passed while these lads attended the Government school in Akbarpur there were two or three changes of the head-master, and twice in the time it happened that the head-master was a Christian; once when Philip Muhkam Dín had the post, and again at the time at which we have been introduced to the town when Mohindránáth Chakkarbatty was in charge of the school. Under other masters the boys heard nothing particular about any religion; the days passed away in regular and hard study, with intervals of boyish sports, and with many a public holiday, on which the boys remained at home for special observances connected with their own religion, or went to *melas* or other *tamáshas*, as the case might be. Out of school-hours they did not come into touch with their master, and nothing in any of their studies or pursuits brought the question of different creeds before

their youthful minds. But it happened that, while Philip Muhkam Dín was master, a small Mission school for boys was opened in another part of the town, to which at first the few Christian boys of the place began to go, and soon others also chose to attend there. In charge of that school was a Christian master from a large Mission station, and it was also occasionally visited by an English missionary.

Philip Muhkam Dín was one of the best friends of the Mission schoolmaster, and it was owing to his influence that many friendships were made between the students at the two schools, as he encouraged their meeting at cricket and in other sports, and occasionally invited boys from each school to his house for recitations and other intellectual entertainments. It was natural that boys who did not attend the Mission school should have their curiosity awakened, and should make many inquiries of their acquaintances who did, and so it came to pass that, although many a lad whose father held strictly orthodox Hindu or Mohammedan views was expressly forbidden even to listen to reports of what was taught and done in the new school, it was not long before the majority of the boys in the town managed to arrive at a tolerably clear understanding as to the order of things there, and to find out something of the distinctive teaching which went on there. The immediate result of this was that many scoffed, and

a few were led to a closer friendship with Christian boys, and to more inquiry and a keener feeling of interest. But ultimately most of the wondering and questioning ceased; like other surprising things, this enterprise on the part of the missionaries had its "nine days" of novelty, and then the Mission school was allowed quietly to take and hold its place among the other institutions of the town, and its boys made good progress, went up for examinations, and passed in as good proportion as the boys from other schools; aye, and sometimes in better. So in the course of two or three years it seemed to be almost forgotten by the inhabitants of Akbarpur that the Mission school, which many of them now admired and liked, had ever been a somewhat unpopular innovation.

When Muhkam Chand was about twelve years old he had a boy friend who studied at the Mission school, and who was intimate with some of the Christians of the place. Often did he hear something from this companion which made him have a strange fancy to know more about Christian people and their religion, and, boy as he was, he made an earnest resolve in his own heart, and most secretly (for he knew the intense bigotry of his family), that somehow or other he would obtain for himself and diligently investigate the statements of some portion of the Christians' Book. An opportunity came.

It happened one day, as all the boys were coming

"'But will you really read it?' said the lady."—*Page* 63.

Nihál Chand and his brother were among the crowd round the lady, and their hands were, with many others, ready to snatch anything to read which she might offer; but as she gave Nihál Chand a leaflet with the title, "The Precious Blood of Christ," and looking straight at him, said, "This will teach you about the only way of salvation," he started back. No! he didn't want *that*. He recollected himself, and at once chose to forego the pleasure of "something to read" rather than run the risk of reading anything so contrary to all his ideas of what was right. He refused the tract and turned away. "Come away, boys," he cried, "the books are not good. Come away, Muhkam Chand; we ought not to read these things."

"Yes, brother, I am coming," said Muhkam Chand; but he went quickly round to the other side of the *doolie* and hurriedly whispered, "O ma'am! please give me one little portion of your Holy Book. I want no tract; I want Bible."

"But will you really read it?" said the lady.

"Yes, yes; I must, I will. *Do give;* my brother is getting angry. I *promise* to read. I have wished to do so from many days."

With one or two earnest words to the boy, which she could scarcely detain him to hear as he almost snatched the Gospel of St. Luke from her hand, the lady lifted up her heart to the prayer-hearing

God for a blessing on His own Word, and besought Him to make it "a savour of life unto life" to that dear lad.

God works wondrously, and often in ways which seem to foolish man *slow*. Where we would hurry on to what we imagine to be a brilliant success, He calmly waits, and—

> "Deep in unfathomable mines
> Of never-failing skill,
> He treasures up His deep designs
> And works His sovereign Will."

Muhkam Chand's new treasure was for a long time most carefully hidden, for he really desired to read and to understand something of its teaching, and at first he took opportunities of quietly reading a little when alone, and then again he would lock up the Book. Then would come a season of forgetfulness, and it remained for many weeks unsought and unread, and once several months passed by without more than an occasional thought of it crossing his mind. Then again, when some circumstance reminded him of the Christian's teaching, he would for a few days bethink him of his Book, and turning it out, read two or three passages. He was a thoughtful lad, and he liked exceedingly the style of the reading; he said to himself that the language was beautiful and the stories very attrac-

tive. He wondered why there was something about the parables and the accounts of Christ's miracles which always made him want to read more. Other books, too, were pleasing to him. He loved history, and was noted at school for having such a thirst for knowledge of all sorts that it seemed impossible for him to get satisfied; but somehow or other this one portion of the Gospel had delights for him which not even the most charming school-books had ever possessed. As he grew more and more interested in St. Luke's account of our Blessed Lord's life, he became conscious that he was held, as it were, in a chain; that a power, gentle yet strong, was growing upon him, and that he was beginning almost naturally to bring other things, other studies, other pursuits, to the test of this one small Book. But this came about very gradually indeed, and it was just five years since the day when he had received it from the missionary lady's hand—five years since, on her homeward ride in her *doolie*, she had again and again pleaded with God for a blessing on that Gospel and for the salvation of that boy's soul—that Muhkam Chand first acknowledged to himself that, instead of sometimes reading it as an amusement and sometimes forgetting it for weeks together, returning to its casual study only as a pleasant intellectual pastime, he was now drawn within the strange and powerful influence of its teaching.

He had begun to love, not alone its beautiful language, or the touching simplicity of its stories and parables, but *something else;* something which—he knew not how or why—met a yearning of his spirit; something to which his heart responded. He was puzzled, and often asked himself what this mysterious something could be.

At length, after many questionings, he came one day to the conclusion that it was not *something*, but *some One*, for that the beauty and attractiveness of the Book lay entirely in its Central Figure, in the character and work and words of the One whose history it told; and he said to himself, as he thoughtfully turned over one after another of its now well-read pages, "The Book speaks to my heart because of this wonderful Man; its attractive beauty is Jesus Christ."

When he had come to this decision he felt deeply moved, and wondered in himself whether he were doing wrong in studying this book so much. One moment he half resolved to put it away once for all and to read it no more; the next he found himself reasoning that he had at least seen no harm whatever in it, he had read no words in its pages except the purest, had felt no thoughts stirred within him except thoughts of wonder at the power and wisdom and love of Him whose words and deeds he was studying, and of desire to be made holy and happy. "Surely," he would say in his heart, "a Book with

such effects cannot be bad, and yet our learned Pandits hate it and forbid us to read it." Thus tossed about with many anxious and doubting thoughts, he finally resolved that, as Philip Muhkam Dín was again his schoolmaster, he would take the opportunity always so readily given to the lads by the earnest Christian placed temporarily, in God's providence, at the head of their school, and seek a quiet conversation with him on the subject which so engrossed his mind. Philip Muhkam Dín had had a large amount of experience in dealing with boys, and could enter with much gentle sympathy into their difficulties and understand their various modes of thought, especially on religious subjects; and one thing which gave him power with his young friends, and enabled him to give a helping hand to not a few, was that he never betrayed their confidence or discussed their heart-secrets in common conversation with others. So the promise not to tell was at once given and at once trusted. "For you must promise not to tell," the lad had said as he set out one evening on a quiet road near the town in company with the schoolmaster; and then forthwith he began his simple tale concerning the possession of that Gospel of St. Luke, and how he had grown so fond of it, and so convinced of there being something good and wonderful in it, something which did not appear to him to be found in other religious books.

The schoolmaster listened with a happy heart, but, for the sake of the lad's safety, he dared not in the public road betray any of his emotion; and, indeed, Muhkam Chand's story was often interrupted by the necessity all at once for being quiet or talking about something else, whenever they met acquaintances or passed a number of boys or men, lest his words should be overheard and repeated to his relations, when, of course, all further intercourse with the schoolmaster would speedily be put an end to. Among other things, he told his teacher how greatly he longed to see once more that lady who, seated in her *doolie*, had given him the precious Gospel and made him promise to read it. "It is now nearly three years since I have seen her *doolie* passing occasionally through our town; but I have never again had a chance to speak to her since that day, more than five years ago, when she gave me the Gospel. I should so like to know where she is, and why during these three years I have not seen her again."

Philip Muhkam Dín replied, very gravely, "She is in heaven. For all of us who are left here without her help and friendship it is very sad, but for *her* it is joy and rest, and so we say with all our hearts, 'The Lord's Will be done!' She was for some years in this neighbourhood, working in the different villages among the ignorant women and chil-

dren, and speaking to boys and men whom she met on the road, pointing out to them the only way of salvation. Her schools are still carried on by teachers whom she trained, but as yet no one has come from England to take her place, and she is much missed and lamented by many people."

After a little pause Philip Muhkam Dín added, "I am sure that, if she gave you that Gospel, she prayed earnestly to God to bless it to you, and to show you in it the way to be saved and made happy for ever."

"I have never heard Christians pray," said the lad. "Do you believe that God hears them?"

"Oh yes!" was the hearty answer. "There is not the slightest possibility of doubt; for in the Holy Book which God has given us to be a lamp unto our feet and a light unto our paths He has promised—and He cannot lie—to hear and answer our prayers. One condition, however, among others—and the most important of them—is imposed. It is that those prayers should be offered in the name of Jesus, for He is our Mediator and Redeemer, and He has, by His precious death and glorious resurrection, opened a way for us into the presence of God and ensured our acceptance."

The boy seemed interested and pleased, and raised none of the objections which are so commonly put forward by lads of his age. This struck Philip very

much, and he felt encouraged to go on and tell him more and more of the blessed truths of the Gospel. His words found a ready listener, because that listener was one whose heart had been already impressed by the Word of God, with the Blessed Spirit of all grace and light teaching him, although he knew it not, and leading him on to trust, through the instrumentality of that one Book.

If there is a lesson in connection with mission work which, beyond others, needs to be more fully and practically learned by the people of God, it is the lesson of the urgent importance of disseminating His Holy Word.

Muhkam Chand never forgot his walk that evening with the Christian schoolmaster. How he wished all Christians were like this one, and how he wondered why they were not! Why was Bábu Mohindránáth Chakkarbatty always so unwilling, when he happened to be in charge of the school, to let the boys ask him any questions about Christianity? And how was it that he himself would scarcely have liked to venture to tell him anything of what he had so gladly confided to Philip, and would certainly not have expected much sympathy or help from him if he had? Both were Christians; it puzzled the boy. "Surely," he thought, "if a man can choose to be a Christian, he should not be frightened and ashamed about his religion. It is either good or bad;

if good, he should rejoice in it and teach it to others; if bad, he should leave it." Conscience, which in his case was awake, soon made him apply this test to his own religion, and he made answer to himself, "But I am only considering as yet; and when I have decided, then I shall *act*."

Before he parted from his kind friend and schoolmaster that evening he heard that within a week an exchange of head-masters would again take place, and Mohindránáth be once more at Akbarpur, while Philip expected promotion to the important school in the city of Amritsar. He was very sorry, and he thought perhaps he should never see this kind friend again; but his love for him, strong as it really was, could not prevail to make him agree to the proposal that they should kneel together for a minute or two in prayer under a tree by the roadside. It was getting dusk, and the road at a little distance from the town was nearly deserted, compared with what it had been an hour before; but Muhkam Chand feared lest any one who knew him should pass by, and so he said quickly, "No; we should be seen. I dare not. But I shall remember all your kind teaching, and thank you." Then he added, with a wistful, eager look, "I should like to pray in my own room; but do you think God will hear *my* prayers?" He was earnestly and affectionately assured that, without a doubt, God was more willing to hear than he

could be to pray, and he returned home with fresh light breaking in upon his soul.

Another year of quiet waiting and of increasing belief in the power of prayer and in the love of God was to pass away before he would be able to confess Christ before men. But now the lad had a hidden treasure even greater than his old precious Gospel of St. Luke, for he had saved enough pocket-money to purchase for himself a whole Bible, his kind friend, Philip Muhkam Dín, gladly going for him to the shop where they could be had, as he feared exposure if he were seen getting one on his own account.

This Bible he began to study diligently, often at night, so intense grew his desire to know more, and yet more, of its blessed truths. And now, all unknown as he still was to the outside world except as a benighted Hindu, in God's sight he was already a thirsty believer who was beginning to realise the full sweetness of the promise—

"WITH JOY SHALL YE DRAW WATER OUT OF THE WELLS OF SALVATION."

CHAPTER V.

"*A LITTLE CHILD SHALL LEAD THEM.*"

A little child,
So feeble, so afflicted, and withal
So little practised in the ways of earth,
Doth take the agèd traveller by the hand ;
And then, in eager, childish sympathy,
Stretch yet another hand to that young scholar
Keen for learning ; and the while to each alike
He lisps with simple faith the story of *his Friend ;*
Before they are aware he leads them on,
With those strong silken cords of child's sweet love,
Nearer to Jesus.

It was only a few days before the time at which we were introduced to little blind David and his father, as well as to the goldsmith's family, that an old man might have been seen slowly moving through the busy *bázárs* of Akbarpur. He walks with a stooping figure ; the marks of travel and neglect are plainly visible upon him ; any one passing him closely might often hear him sigh, and he seems absorbed in anxious thought. He rarely asks an alms, and he appears to have no care about his bodily wants ; but occasionally he sits down by the wayside as if too weary to go farther, and at such times the charitable passer-by often gives him a pice or two,

or some one comes out of a little shop and offers him a small quantity of flour or rice or other dry food, with a lowly reverence before him in acknowledgment of the evident fact that he is a holy Brahman. He never refuses what is offered, but looks grateful and pleased. Surely we have seen that wistful, eager face before, and that weary, stooping form? Yes! the traveller is none other than Narain Dáss, our old friend the *faqír*, and he has reached the plains after his long hill-journey, and is feeling worn-out with his fatigue and exposure, while the heat of these last days of the month of June seems almost more than his aged frame can bear.

Narain Dáss had walked, with short intervals of rest, all the way from the shady resting-place under the pípal-tree where we last saw him to the railway, a distance of about thirty miles. In the early part of his life he would have found no railway there to carry him on; and even now, in his old age, he would not have availed himself, but for his many infirmities, of such a mode of reaching his destination, but would have tramped on in spite of weariness, passing slowly from village to village and from town to town, until he had fulfilled his desire to gaze upon that famous tank which was so far renowned among the Sikhs, and into the special merits of which he, though a Brahman, was resolved to make careful inquiry once more before his death,

lest he should miss any blessing obtainable therefrom; for he was losing faith in everything he had trusted and loved since boyhood, and he would at least know whether all seekers of life everlasting who went to that tank expecting to find the priceless boon were disappointed in their hope of proving the waters around Amritsar's Golden Temple to be "the Well-Spring of Immortality."

But to take the railway even as far as Akbarpur meant to be saved a walk of two hundred miles, and Narain Dáss was too old to think lightly of such an advantage. Besides, there was the saving of time to be thought of; for he greatly doubted whether, if he attempted the journey on foot, he should ever reach his destination at all, as something seemed to tell him that the sands of life were running out very rapidly now and the end was near. The desire to break his journey at Akbarpur originated in his wish to visit a very venerable and holy *faqír* whom he had heard of as living not far from that town. He had never seen him, and was not sure whether he would prove to be a Brahman or a Sikh, but he had been much impressed by rumours of his remarkable sanctity and learning, and he longed to add a visit to this holy man to the already long list of religious duties performed by himself. The cost of the railway ticket was small, and he had carefully treasured up all

the pice he received in alms, living on whatever small offerings of food were given him in addition, until he had just enough to carry him in the crowded third-class carriage, which, having an upper storey, is capable of carrying eighty persons, and often carries *more!*

When he reached Akbarpur it was still only about two weeks since, by the mountain stream, he had told the listening travellers the history of his life. But in those few days he seemed to have grown much more weary and weighed down with care. Even the comparatively quick and easy way in which he had accomplished his journey had not prevented his looking more tired than ever, and as he frequently sat down to rest for a little while, he often said to himself, "So many years, and so much toil, and no satisfaction!"

He asked from one or two persons the way to the abode of the famous old *faqîr*, and was directed by one who seemed to know to walk straight on out of the town for about a mile, and then to turn into a garden, where, in a little temple, he would find the object of his search.

Narain Dáss was disappointed to find that he had still so far to go, and again he sat down and waited while he considered whether he had strength enough left to do the walk that evening. Just then the two sons of the goldsmith happened to pass.

"See," said Nihál Chand, "here is a poor old *faqír;* let us give him a few pice."

When the brothers had given an alms to the old man, and he had solemnly said, "God reward you!" they were about to pass on, but he detained them to ask once more the distance to the dwelling-place of the celebrated old *faqír*, with perhaps a faint hope that those who had spoken of it as a mile might prove to have been mistaken; but Muhkam Chand's ready answer at once dashed that hope—

"Oh Bábá! you cannot go half so far to-night; it is two miles and a half, and you look so tired you will faint by the way. Go early in the morning, and meanwhile come to our house. Our father always approves of our bringing home any holy man to whom he may have the privilege of giving a room, a *chárpaie*, and some bread. Yes, you must come home with us; and in the morning I shall go with you to guide you to the holy *faqír*, for it will be a Mohammedan feast, and therefore a holiday for all the schools."

And so it came to pass that Narain Dáss, the *faqír*, went home with young Muhkam Chand and his brother, and accepted the food gladly given to him as a religious duty by the goldsmith's family, within one of the courts of whose house he was soon resting on a bare *chárpaie* under the open sky. The fierce heat of the day was gone, but the close, stifling

air made sleeping in small native rooms a torture, and every one took his *chárpaie* to roof or open court in the hope of obtaining sleep.

Muhkam Chand had the character in his family of being "very religious," and no one was surprised, therefore, that he seemed much attracted by the old man, and showed a disposition to stay near him to hear him talk. Narain Dáss did not talk much, but he told his young listener *some* of his history, though not at all in the full and minute way in which he had told it on the hillside. Muhkam Chand had an intense desire to ask this holy man something about his ideas on the subject of prayer. He wondered whether he had any comfort from his prayers. The old man seemed to him too honest and simple to be a cheat, but did he really believe that his *mantras* were acceptable to God, and that his bead-counting was of any avail in the great work of saving his soul?

The lad thought he would go and ask him, and accordingly, when others were eating their evening meal, he went yet again to find his new acquaintance. He expected to see him risen from his *chárpaie* and gone to perform some special evening devotions in a room opening off the court where he was to sleep, a room set apart for *faqírs*, for the goldsmith regarded it as a meritorious act to take in one of these holy men and give him a room in which he

would be uninterrupted in the performance of all the duties of religion.

The old man was reading; for, although it was already dark, a small *chirág* had been carefully placed for his use. Muhkam Chand saw his stooping figure bending towards the light while he appeared to be very eagerly perusing the small book which he held in his hand. He was seated on the floor with his back towards the door, and was so engrossed with his occupation that he did not notice the approach of Muhkam Chand, who came near enough to glance over his shoulder at the little book, and who was unable to suppress an exclamation of astonishment as he saw that it was a portion (in Hindi) of the Christians' Holy Book. Narain Dáss hastily closed the book, and as he remained quiet, Muhkam Chand said, "What, Bábá! are you, then, reading the Christians' Bible?"

"And how do *you*, my son, so easily recognise it as the Christians' Bible? Have you ever seen it before?"

Muhkam Chand evaded this question by replying, "Read some words to me, Bábá, and I will tell you if I have ever heard them before."

But the old man was not willing at first to comply with this request, and he continued to try and ascertain how Muhkam Chand could so easily have recognised the book in his hand.

Muhkam Chand said, "Of course, Bábá, you never went to school, and you do not know how in these days all books come before the eyes of schoolboys, and they hear a good deal about different religions." So saying, the lad threw himself on a *chárpaie* and began to fan himself with as indifferent an air as he could assume.

Narain Dáss opened his book and said, "I learned to read Hindi as I was going about from one *faqír* to another in the days of my youth, and once some one gave me this portion of the Book of the Christians. There is some fine writing in it, in spite of the strange notions of the people who believe it."

"What strange notions in particular are held by Christians?" asked the boy, as carelessly as he could.

"Oh! they think that all men are hopelessly unable to help themselves and keep themselves from sin, and that no one can be holy unless he first gets all his old sins forgiven; and even then that his alms and prayers and pilgrimages do not save him or make him holy, but that all has to be done for him by *Another;* and they say that One does it for all men of all countries alike; that He calls *all* and welcomes *all*, and does the work of salvation for *all*, and that His death"—("Which, of course, we know is an historical fact," interrupted the boy)—"was by way of a sacrifice for all."

"But," urged the very interested listener, "I want

to hear you read, Bábá. Read some passages from your Book."

At last Narain Dáss complied, and for the first time in that dark Hindu house the Word of God, which liveth and abideth for ever, was read aloud. Very strange it was to the dear lad, who had so long studied its sacred pages in secret, to hear it read by another, and very beautiful and sweet did the words sound in his ears as the old *faqír* read slowly by the dim light, and yet with a fluency and power of expression which showed that he was very familiar with what he was reading—the third and fourth chapters of St. John's Gospel.

Afterwards the old man spoke of the peculiar appropriateness of the image of water, and said how truly the soul which was longing for God was *athirst*, and how really he could understand the sense of satisfaction and rest which might come if man could only believe he had been forgiven and could be made holy; it would certainly be like the quenching of a long parching thirst.

"But, alas!" he concluded, "it seems to me that such blessedness is not for us mortals. Nothing that has been taught us or written for us comes at all near to satisfying the thirst of the soul. I propose now to go to the Golden Temple at Amritsar, because some holy Sikh *faqírs* say that there, at the 'Well-Spring of Immortality,' real satisfac-

tion may be found, and that even Brahmans have proved the efficacy of its waters. It may be that, in my old age, though I have often tried in vain before, I shall find it possible to quench my thirst, and then I shall die in peace. First, however, I should like to see the holy man of whom I told you, and after that I will proceed to Amritsar."

"Good," said the boy, not willing for the present to confide anything to his new acquaintance; "I shall go with you to-morrow, as I promised, and so help you on your way. Meanwhile you are tired and should rest, and so I leave you for the night. *Salám*, father."

"*Salám*, my son," said the old man, and they parted.

The boy returned to his brother, and talked on many subjects in boyish fashion, but ever and anon in his heart the words seemed to be ringing out as clearly as if a voice had spoken to him—"A well of water springing up into everlasting life." The absurdity of supposing that that tank at Amritsar could be the "Well-Spring of Immortality" began to make itself more and more felt, and he wondered how any intelligent, educated man or schoolboy could ever believe in such a lie.

The next morning very early he set forth to show Narain Dáss the way to the old *faqír's* abode. It happened to be a Mohammedan feast-day, but

that made no difference to the people of other religions, except to ensure the children a holiday from school. The month's fast, called the "*Ramazán*," was just ended, and the poor Mohammedans, who fully believed that during the four weeks of their so-called fast they had been gaining the favour and blessing of God, began to enjoy themselves in good earnest; the men first of all, of course, going to the Masjid to read prayer and to hear some preaching, and afterwards every one making merry the whole day. But it would puzzle any one to have to explain what was being done or commemorated or enjoyed. What can thousands of people find in such an aimless sort of festivity to enjoy or to make much of? There seemed to be no point in it all; and perhaps the one good effect it might be said to have was, that certainly every Mohammedan came out on that morning as cleanly and decently dressed as he could; and even the poor women and children looked tidy and clean for once in the year, and were in most instances gaily dressed, bright-coloured *cháddars* distinguishing the girls and women, while the boys set themselves off with magnificent turbans which looked as if they had just come from the hands of the dyer. These people were all bustling to and fro, carrying trays of sweets and fruit as offerings for their friends, and talking and laughing loudly in the full enjoyment of their

"great day." The preparation of the sweets, &c., is the part which can be enjoyed by the *pardah-nishín*, or women who never go out of their zenanas, and many of the gaily dressed and unusually clean women in the streets are carrying trays from one *pardah* lady to another, and are their servant-women.

If any one should chance to ask a Mohammedan what it all meant, he would probably receive for answer no further explanation than the words, "Oh, we are *keeping the Feast.*" But as far as any motive or purpose in keeping such a feast was concerned, none could give a reason for keeping it at all; and as to spiritual edification or teaching, how could the poor benighted creatures get these out of their religion, seeing they were never in it? A *shell* they may possess, but we shall look in vain for a *kernel.* But to our Hindu friends the doings of the Mohammedans make little difference, and so Muhkam Chand and his new acquaintance went on their way together not at all affected by the feast and the gay crowds who were keeping it. Just before they reached the gate of the town by which they would have emerged upon the road to the *faqír's* abode, they saw that the people were running together in a state of great excitement at one place, and there were loud cries as if some accident had occurred. They quickly joined the others in trying to find out

"The servant-lad seated him under a pípal-tree in a cool corner by a well."
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what was the matter, and were told many different tales, probable and improbable. From all they could make out, it appeared that a blind boy had been knocked down by a horse which had suddenly turned a corner as the child was crossing the road.

At once Muhkam Chand exclaimed, "Oh, I must see whether it is my schoolmaster's son!"

Elbowing his way through the crowd, he managed to reach the boy, who was standing up and trying to free himself from all his kind helpers and sympathisers. It was little David, and very delighted he was to hear Muhkam Chand's voice, which he knew at once, and as soon as he could get near to him he begged the schoolboy to take him home. It turned out that he had not really been knocked down by the horse, but only by a sudden movement in the crowd as the horse quickly turned the corner; so he was not hurt, only a little frightened. The child was never allowed to go out by himself, though very clever at finding his way about. On that morning, however, the servant-lad who took care of him had left him for a few minutes while he himself went to a shop; but he had first most carefully seated him under a pípal-tree in a cool corner by a well, and had bid him on no account to move until he came to take him home. But little David was venturesome, and thought he would like to try and get home alone, so he called out merrily after Fath Kẖán, his

servant-boy, "Perhaps, when you come again, you will find that I have run away."

Fath Kẖán was indeed in great trouble when he returned to the pípal-tree and found his little charge gone; and hurrying as quickly as he could towards home, the while he thought of many things to say to the child by way of reprimand and to frighten him from attempting any such venturesome tricks in future, he overtook, within a few yards of the schoolmaster's door, the little strange-looking party—the aged *faqír*, the bright, intelligent Hindu schoolboy, and the delicate blind child giving a hand to each of his companions, who were leading him with much kindness and speaking cheerfully to him about his fright.

"Thanks be to Allah!" exclaimed Fath Kẖán, "my luck is good indeed! That child might have been killed or kidnapped, or had some other dreadful thing happen to him, and then what would have become of me?" and again and again saying, "Praise to Allah!" Fath Kẖán hurried on and overtook our three pedestrians. Many explanations followed, and then Fath Kẖán was preparing to resume his charge of the boy, but little David said, No; he would take the *faqír* and Muhkam Chand home, and tell his mother how kind they had been to him; and, besides, he wanted to talk with them, and hear where they were going and what they meant to

do on this holiday, and so would they please go on talking and leading him between them?

Ah! how little did they imagine that a little child was leading *them!*

When they all reached the schoolmaster's house they found him at home on account of the holiday. Fath Kẖán hurried on with a very anxious heart, and hastily began to tell his story, but he was interrupted—

"Wretch!" exclaimed Bábu Mohindránáth, "you have killed my son, and now you would like to hide your evil doings with a lie."

But little David was close behind, and in a moment his eager voice was heard—

"No, no, father; it was my own fault; and see, I am not hurt at all; and here is one of your schoolboys, and a *faqír* who was walking with him is just outside; and they were kind to me, and helped me all the way home. It was my fault, it was *not* Fath Kẖán's; he only left me under that pípal where I often have sat and waited for him before. He told me to wait, but I wanted to try and get home alone; so, please, don't be angry with Fath Kẖán."

David's mother was clasping her darling child in her arms by this time, but she soon put him down and turned courteously to the strangers, whom the schoolmaster had been too excited to notice.

"Sit down and rest," she said kindly. "It was very good of you to walk up here with my child instead of carrying out your own plans, as no doubt *you*" (turning to Muhkam Chand) "had arranged some nice way of spending a public holiday?"

"No," he replied; "nothing in particular. I was really without plans, Bibi Sahiba, until I found that this venerable father was in need of guidance to the place where lives, in wondrous sanctity, the honoured *faqír* Behári Lál, and I volunteered to spend my holiday in showing him the road thither; and we were proceeding on our way, when we were suddenly made aware of your little son's supposed accident, and we at once hastened to the spot to render him all the help we could."

The wife of the schoolmaster could scarcely refrain from smiling at the mention of *faqír* Behári Lál's "wondrous sanctity," for she could not help remembering some of the reports concerning his life which were utterly opposed to his claim to any such description, and she had several times seen the repulsive-looking old man who made his living by trading on the credulity of multitudes of poor, ignorant, foolish persons to whom "sanctity" was a word meaning nothing at all. But she was always very courteous to those non-Christians who happened to come to her house, and anxious to win them to the knowledge of the One who was to her at all

times "a living, bright Reality;" so she never hastily said anything which would unnecessarily wound their feelings, and now she only remarked to Muhkam Chand, "It will be a long walk, my son, and you must be very tired and——" she was going to add thirsty, but she paused, for she remembered she could not offer any water or other refreshment to a Hindu.

At that moment little David's father exclaimed, "Oh! I remember that *faqír* Behári Lál is not in this district just now; he is gone on a special pilgrimage to the Ganges, and he will not be back for some three or four weeks. I heard this yesterday on good authority, so it would be only waste of time for you to go and seek him at his usual place on the Akbarpur road.

"What will you do *now*, Bábá?" asked Muhkam Chand of the old man.

Narain Dáss looked up weary and disappointed, and said in a very sad tone, "Truly, my son, I do not know, unless I just begin my journey to Amritsar."

"First you shall return and rest yet one more night at our house," said the lad, "and then you shall proceed. But before we begin our walk home, Bábá, would you not like to drink some water? See, I can fetch you some very quickly from the well of that Brahman who lives on the other side of the road."

Narain Dáss gratefully accepted this offer, and while Muhkam Chand was gone for the water he

sat looking very tired and sad. Little David felt his way near to the old man, and began to ask him about his life and journeys. The *faqír* told him but little, just to satisfy and please the child, and he often sighed as he told how he was going on to Amritsar, seeking rest.

"Oh!" cried the child, "I wish you knew my Friend. You can't go to see *your* friend; you see, you've been disappointed; but I can always find *my* Friend!"

"And who is your friend?" asked the old man.

"My Friend is Jesus," lisped the happy, trusting child. "He takes care of me, and gives me all I want; and to-day He sent you and Muhkam Chand to help me when I was in trouble."

"How do you know that?" questioned the old *faqír*.

"Because He has promised to be always with those who love Him, and He gives His angels charge over them to keep them in all their ways."

David's mother looked very happy, and was thanking God in her heart for the dear child's simple testimony, and his father did not interfere until the schoolboy returned; but he then began to show anxiety lest in his, the Government schoolmaster's house, there should be any effort made to proselytise the boys who happened to come there.

Muhkam Chand brought some water for Narain Dáss, and called him outside to drink it. After this they came together into the little outer room of the

schoolmaster's house, where the blind child was still waiting to know what they would do next; and Muhkam Chand took him on his knee and said, "Now then, little one, sing us one of your pretty songs."

The *faqír* sat on a low *chárpaie*, prepared to listen, and the child began and sang through the hymn beginning—

"Jesus the water of life has given,
Freely, freely, freely;"

and the sweet refrain sounded more beautiful than anything he had ever heard before to the tired old wanderer.

As they were leaving David's mother said, "*Salám*, Bábá; and *salám*, my son. Will you remember that it is not only the prettiness of the hymn that we want you to think of, but the blessedness of the Word of God which invites us all, saying—

"'WHOSOEVER WILL, LET HIM TAKE THE WATER OF LIFE FREELY'?"

CHAPTER VI.

'THINE FOR EVER!"

Hush! Now I hear that loving Voice
  Which bids me come to *Him;*
And with my heavy load of guilt,
  And through the shadows dim,
I rise to enter on the way
  That leadeth unto life,
Though tempting voices bid me stay,
  Though deadly is the strife.
Though right across my path to Christ
  There lies Despond's dark slough,
He bids me come to Him for life,
  And I am coming *now!*
I am not worthy, this I know;
  Yet, though He say me nay,
My sin-sick soul resolves to go
  To Him this very day.

When Muhkam Chand and the *faqîr* left the house of the schoolmaster it was getting very hot, for they had lingered a long time, and now they could only get back by the most shady ways they could find to the goldsmith's house to rest. The *faqîr* was unwilling to do this, for he was longing to reach Amritsar, and his increasing sense of weariness seemed to warn him that his days were numbered. But his young companion felt singularly drawn towards

him and very desirous to have further talk with the interesting old man, so he urged him to come to his father's house and have at least a few hours more of rest before proceeding on his way. "And then," he argued, "you will be able to think about your plans and decide what to do now that you cannot see the *faqír*, Behári Lál."

When they reached the house Narain Dáss took the food prepared for him, and then lay down to sleep in the little room which had been set apart for him. But he could not rest. Oh, that word "freely"! how it echoed and re-echoed in his ears and in his heart! Whenever he began to sink off into restful unconsciousness of his surroundings, it seemed as though the sweet, earnest tones of a child's voice could be heard close beside him singing, "Jesus the water of life hath given, freely, freely, freely!" "Oh! then, why," he would cry as he suddenly started up, "why have I toiled and travelled, why have I lived a life of hardship, why am I worn nearly to the death, and yet why have I, with all my toil and with all my self-denial, not gained as yet that for which I have spent and done *all?* Is it true, indeed, that the blessing for which I pant and thirst is *free?*"

Presently Muhkam Chand came to see him. The lad's heart had gone out to his strange old companion in a very singular manner, and he felt

attracted to him, and longed to find out more about him; but he knew that he must be very cautious indeed in all that he said, lest he should inadvertently drop any words which might betray his own secret *decision* (for it had come to that now) that he himself must follow Jesus. With considerable caution and reserve, therefore, he sat down beside the *faqír*.

"Bábá," he asked, "what did you think of the little boy's song?"

"It was pretty, and suited the child," replied the old man with equal caution; "and I should like well to hear it again."

"But do you think, Bábá, that there can be any truth in such songs?"

"Ah, my son! if we could think *that*, we should have found out a secret which would indeed be worth all the gold in India. Why! Did not the boy sing that the Water of Immortality has been given by their religious teacher *freely?* It would be a fine gift. But, of course, the question which must for ever remain darkly unanswered is this—Who can prove that such a statement is true?"

"Bábá," said the lad, "there will be this evening a preaching about the matter, but it will be in English, and it is intended especially for boys who read English in school. Now, you see, I often go to hear all about other people's ways of think-

ing, and nobody here objects to my just going to hear and see. My brother does not like it, and he hardly ever goes; but it is a very pleasant way to pass an evening, and, you see, it improves my knowledge of English, among other things; so I think I shall go to-night."

"Go, my son; and when you come back tell me what you may have heard. As for me, I shall not go, for I cannot understand that language; and what, therefore, could possibly be the benefit to me? I shall prosecute my journey to Amritsar as quickly as I can, after availing myself for one more night of the hospitality of your family."

Muhkam Chand assured the *faqîr* that he knew he was right welcome to all that they could give him, and that his father would be glad to hear that for yet another night he would remain to bless their humble home.

In the evening he set forth to the room, well lighted, and with its many texts from Holy Scripture adorning the walls and speaking silent messages to each person who entered, where some of God's servants were about to hold a meeting in the name of Christ and preach the Word of everlasting life.

A few boys were already there when he arrived, and others were waiting outside. Some of the outsiders scoffed and mocked at those who went in;

and others, as soon as the meeting began, busied themselves in calling out those who were willing enough, if only they were left alone, to sit quietly on the benches and listen.

"I will go straight and tell your father I saw you here, Muhkam Chand," said a mischievous-looking boy of about his own age.

"Go and tell him if you care to," was the reply. "He knows I come, and he likes me to listen to English. He will say nothing, and every young man and boy may go to hear what he likes in these days."

He affected carelessness, but an earnest watcher could see differences in those boys as they sat in various idle attitudes on the benches; and those who were so prayerfully, and with strong faith and warm love, choosing the hymns and preparing to begin the meeting knew one boy from another pretty well, and had not a few special names to bear up on their hearts before God, and among those names was Muhkam Chand's. Ah! he scarcely knew it; he certainly did not realise all that it meant; but as he sat with a quiet, waiting manner, looking for the beginning of the meeting, the thought came into more than one heart then yearning to save souls, "Surely Muhkam Chand is very near the Kingdom." He did not realise, either, how very much nearer he was *then* than he had been that morning, how

the child's simple song had been used by God to break down almost his last feeling of opposition to the power of the truths which had since so many months gained so strong a hold upon him, and how from his inmost heart he was just now yearning to accept once for all the living water which Jesus gave, "freely, freely, freely."

The meeting began. Hymns of earnest invitation to the Saviour arrested the attention of most of the audience for some time, and even the naughty boys who had come on purpose to interrupt seemed to like the strains of "Whosoever will." Then came the reading of God's Word, when, sad to say, several arose noisily and tried to disturb others, and giving back to the president the hymn-book which each on first entering had seemed to covet, went out laughing, and, once outside, continued to plague others until a few more, wishing perhaps to stay, but too cowardly to do so, arose and followed their companions.

After reading and prayer and more singing, an address was given founded upon the words of our Lord to the Samaritan woman, "If thou knewest the gift of God, and who it is that saith to thee, Give Me to drink, thou wouldest have asked of Him, and He would have given thee living water." The speaker spoke of the *ignorance* of the sinner—in such close contact with the Saviour, within such easy reach of

the gift of God, and yet *not knowing!* He spoke of the sin and hardness of heart which led to this fatal dulness of perception. He then spoke of the certain results of knowing—knowing not merely with the intellect, but with a warm, loving, believing heart. The results must be—(1) asking; (2) receiving. "Thou wouldest have asked. He would have given."

The address was simple and short, and closed with an earnest invitation to each and all to come and take of the water of life which Jesus was so willing to give, "freely, freely, freely." Many boys and men there would not have listened quietly to anything long or difficult to follow, but the brevity and simplicity of this pleased them, and they were content to wait patiently for another hymn; while a few (a *very* few, not one of whom would for worlds have confided the secret of his interest and desire to hear more to his nearest friend or brother) hung upon every word which fell from the speaker's lips, with conflicting and not yet convinced feelings, it is true, but still with one dominant, overwhelming thought rising ever higher and higher, and making itself felt and understood with an ever-increasing intensity—"Oh that I knew if these things were true! Oh! if I could, without doubt or hesitating fear, enter on *this* path to find life everlasting!" But they were indeed few who were thus touched, and in whose

hearts there were feelings and desires so worthy of the occasion, and so superior to the argumentative, cavilling, careless thoughts which had place in most of those present.

There was *one* to whom this moment was the most important of his whole life. With his mind long prepared by studious reading of the Blessed Word, and with his heart just opening to the light and warmth of the love of the Son of God, he had listened, at a time when he was ripe for any serious impressions from without, to the story of a man evidently in earnest, and had understood most thoroughly the deep unsatisfactoriness of old Narain Dáss's life-long quest; and as Muhkam Chand had gazed on the old man's face, and felt how much he was in earnest and how comparatively free he was from the vices and evils so common among *faqírs*, he realised that he had seen *faqír*-life at its best, and had heard the story of its utmost power to satisfy. Yes; and as he pondered over the tale of travel and weariness, of privation and suffering, and the eager, craving, longing, unsatisfied look on the emaciated face, he had said within himself, "The thirst of the soul can *never*, *never* be quenched by even such zeal and resolution as these." And again, when, during the little blind boy's song that morning, he had noted one tear after another course slowly down the old *faqír's* face, and had marked well how after those

tears there were more rest and calm on the rugged features than he had fancied it possible should come upon them, he had said in his heart, "There is a *power* in the words; there is a something mighty about them; there is the same overwhelming constraining power that there is in the pages of the Gospel when I read and re-read them in the solitude of my own room. But the words are simple enough; it isn't the *words*, it is Jesus."

Later on in the day, too, before he came to the meeting, and while affecting to be careless and not too much concerned in these matters, he had been struck by the quiet and hopeful look on the old man's face whenever he referred to the blind child's song.

And now, where was Muhkam Chand? Apparently he was sitting carelessly, like other Hindu boys, on the bench in the Christians' Mission-Room, while all the Christians present were kneeling in prayer, and while, with perhaps a very aching and anxious heart, hearing here and there a laugh and a playful scuffle among the boys, and not knowing whether every one there might not be hardened and angry at the Christians' message, one voice pleaded, "O Father, give Thy blessing, pour out Thy Spirit; let us feel His power; send home to some heart all that has been said; save some soul to-night, for Jesus' sake. Amen." Some of the boys laughingly said "Amen" in

mockery, but one from the depth of his heart echoed the word, and uttered with it the simple vow, "I am Thine for ever!" Tracts with pictures on them, and text-cards and leaflets, were freely given away, every boy, even the most careless, seeming eager to get possession of these scraps of something to read in English, and then the meeting broke up.

It was growing dark as the preacher turned away towards his home, and before he had taken many steps from the door of the room where the meeting had been held he became aware that some one was stealthily following him. Pausing for a moment, he asked quietly who it was, and Muhkam Chand quickly replied under his breath, "Oh, sir! come with me, I beseech you, to some quiet place where we shall not be noticed; I have something to say to you."

They turned into the porch of a schoolroom not far distant, and the preacher asked, "What do you want to say to me, my lad?"

"Well, not exactly to *you*, sir, but to your Saviour, I have something to say;" and down went the boy on his knees, Christ's rejoicing servant gladly understanding in a moment how things were as the words broke forth from that full young heart, "Lord Jesus, take me as I am. I cannot save myself; I cannot please God. I want Thee; I love Thee; I will be Thine for ever!" Other prayers were poured out by

Muhkam Chand and by the worker whose sorrow over lost souls had thus so suddenly been turned into joy over one; and ere they left that quiet porch Muhkam Chand had told his new friend the steps by which he had been led to faith in Christ, and had convinced him that this was no hasty and immature decision, but one which was the result of long seeking and learning and waiting, and that the dear lad had come indeed to Jesus for life and peace. And now, what to do next? was the question. No wonder the young believer trembled as he thought of what might follow.

"One thing," he said, "is plain. I must not delay. There will be no trouble on account of age, for it is quite six months ago that my father told me from my *janam patri* that I was fully eighteen years old, and so I am legally free to do as I like."

"And your wife?" asked his friend.

"Oh, she died when we were both children," said the lad; "so I shall be saved at least the sorrow of having a girl condemned to the miseries and indignities of being a make-believe widow. It was my father's intention to make another marriage arrangement for me soon, but so far I am free."

He subsequently begged his Christian friend not to delay in having him baptized, and said that within a few hours he would return to his or to

some other Christian's house and openly declare himself a believer in Christ.

"Of course," he said, "there will be a terrible disturbance and fuss, and all sorts of things may be done to me. And then I know I must give up my beloved brother and parents and all which one naturally counts most dear; but it is for Jesus, and I *will* not be afraid to do as He bids me. Come what will, I am His for ever."

Together that night the young evangelist and his newly found brother visited one or two Christian friends, and, among others, a missionary, who, although at first afraid to act quickly in any case, felt, after hearing Muhkam Chand's good confession, and understanding the length of time he had been taught of God Himself in His Word, that it was better not to delay, and that the following Sunday might be fixed upon as the day for the baptism, provided that Muhkam Chand would in the meantime tell his family and friends openly of his intention to become a Christian.

At length, with a very happy, light heart, and feeling now as if he could venture to face any difficulties and dangers, the boy turned his face towards his father's house. Every one in the house was very much surprised that he should have stayed out until ten o'clock, and many were the inquiries made as to where he had been and how employed.

"I suppose," said his brother rather sneeringly, "you have been to the preaching, for one thing; but that is over very early in the evening. Perhaps, however, you have had two preachings to-night because it is a public holiday?"

Muhkam Chand parried all the questions, and prepared to take some food; but his heart was too full, he could not eat. He was feeling moment by moment the coming-on of that sorrow and darkness which must, as a rule, be the lot of all who in a Hindu home forsake all to follow Jesus. He felt that he could not keep his secret, and that he must think as quickly as possible of the best way to break it to his family.

But the more he thought and the more he tried, the more utterly impossible did it seem to tell such a thing in such a household. What would be the effect if he now openly declared that he had begun to love, and intended always to follow, the one and only Saviour, Jesus Christ?

Another sneering remark of Nihál Chand's led to a few words from their father, which decided Muhkam Chand that open confession then and there would not be a wise thing, but that he had better first leave home, and afterwards declare to parents and brother his great reason. His brother's remark had been to the effect that he wondered what those Christians expected to do by their meetings, at which

they sang praises to One whom they called "the Son of God," and preached about Him as the only One able to save men from sin and its punishment. He believed a number of boys would go to listen to the music and improve themselves in English, but he should hope his country-people and co-religionists were too sensible to be easily turned over to such absurdities.

Nihál Chand's father replied to his somewhat angry and impatient words, "But it is too true, my son, that a few do believe in all this preaching, and even persuade themselves that the religion of their fathers is utterly a mistake, and that only this Man whom they call the Saviour can appease for them the wrath of God and give them a title to be forgiven their sins and made holy. Christians have an idea that this is done by Him in some sort of way as a substitute, and that all which we devout Hindus know a man can do for himself really goes for nothing—is not counted! In fact, he might as well not have tried to do or be anything. Alas that some of our people should be so easily led astray by foreigners!"

"But, father," said Muhkam Chand, "these foreigners have done us nothing but good. Look at the railways, books, hospitals, schools, hundreds of improvements, advance of all kinds."

"All very well," said the goldsmith; "but they

might have given us these things without forcing their strange religion upon us."

"But it is not forced, father. That is the very point about which Government is so particular. In no Government school is it allowed to be taught, and there has been a promise not to interfere with anybody's religion given by the Queen Empress herself. If, however, some of our people, without any compulsion, go and listen to the new teaching and believe it, they act independently, and we can never say it has been forced upon them."

"Nonsense, boy; don't talk of things you understand nothing about. I tell you it is a bad thing to listen to Christians' talk, and you had better keep away from it as far as ever you can. I could tell a tale that would make some of these young fellows tremble who are so ready to give ear to such lies. It is not so many years ago that a friend of mine had a son who must needs go, being of a high Brahman family, and listen to some preaching and begin to read the Christians' Book. The next thing was, he was *initiated*—'baptized' I think they call it—*made a Christian.* I do not know what is done at the ceremony, as I should not like to lose caste by being present, but I have *heard* that some beef is eaten by the fool who presents himself for the rite, and he is made to undergo some other defiling processes, and is pronounced a Christian. Then, of

"I tell you it is a bad thing to listen to Christians' talk."—*Page* 106.

course, he goes and eats with *Sudras* and *Chuhras* and all sorts of people, and so is further degraded. Well, my friend was nearly mad with vexation and grief; and although his son managed cleverly to give him the slip for a few days, he was caught and brought home, and there he was shut up in a small room, his hands and feet being tied fast, and through a little aperture *boiling oil* was dropped upon them continually until they were blistered all over, and he could only crawl with great pain and difficulty, when his mother, unable to bear the thought of her boy's sufferings, released him in his father's absence. If it had not been for his mother's heart being so soft, that boy would have stayed in there till he died; but when he got out he made known his case, and his father had to give over custody of him, because the law considered he had been 'cruel. Cruel! Why, dearly as I love my sons, if it had been either of *mine*, mother or no mother, he would never have got out, and *neither would the law have known anything about it.* Better for him to be as if he had never been, to die quickly by poison or anything, than for it to go forth to the world that a Brahman had allowed himself to be duped into becoming a Christian. No! if it had been one of mine, no one would have seen him alive again, or heard his cries for mercy. I hope I know too well what is right for a Brahman."

Muhkam Chand heard and quickly resolved. No wonder his young heart quailed. He had thought before that he knew what *could* be done, what *might* happen in that house, to any one who should confess Christ, but now he had heard his father's unequivocal declaration, and he felt he must at least, in the first instance, go out alone and take care not to be caught. Afterwards, by letter, he must distinctly inform his family of his purpose.

This resolution made, he went, late as it was, to the zenana, and stayed for a few minutes chatting with his mother. She was dotingly fond of him, and he felt as if he was tearing his very heart as he made her his last *salám* before going forth upon a course which he knew she, in her ignorance, would regard as a path of degradation and defilement, cutting him off from her for ever. He next went to his room and gathered together a few of his most precious books and some other little things such as he could carry. His brother called out to know if he intended going to sleep that night, and making reply that he should first go and see the *faqír*, he stealthily crept away.

After sitting some time with Narain Dáss, he had just begun to wonder in his own mind whether he should trust him with his secret or not, when the old man asked for an account of the preaching. Muhkam Chand told the substance of the address,

and that with so much earnestness and feeling that at the end of the narration his listener said quietly and slowly, but with very marked emphasis, "*My son, you are a Christian!*"

The boy began to stammer out a reply, which the old *faqír* imagined was denial, and he quickly continued, "Nay, my son, deny it not; and you may trust me, whatever you are, I will not betray you. But I ask no confidence; only, if you wish to tell me anything, tell it without fear."

Muhkam Chand, though by no means quite sure of his companion, yet felt so encouraged by all that he had noticed in him, that he said at length, carefully weighing every word he spoke, "Well, Bábá, we are nearly strangers, but I think I can tell that you are a true seeker after God, and so am I. I honour you for all that you are doing, with so much earnestness and patience, in order to find salvation; and I believe that some day, and perhaps before long, you will be guided to the true and only way, and receive the gift of God, which is eternal life, through Jesus Christ. Meanwhile, I tell you now that I mean to go forth this night from my father's house because I have chosen to follow Christ, whose blessed life I have studied now for many months. There remains no doubt in my mind that He is the one and only Saviour. No fears are in my heart, for He is with me; and deep

as the sorrow must be of turning away from home and kindred, and facing perhaps poverty and hardship, yet He has given me joy by His sorrow and life by His death. And what are *my* small trials? I am resolved to follow Jesus."

All the time that Muhkam Chand was thus addressing him, the *faqír* remained quietly gazing upon the fine, open face of the lad, and when he ceased speaking he asked, "But what of your father? How will he feel? What will your mother do?"

"Speak not of it," cried the boy; "rather help me by bidding me be of good courage. And, now I have trusted you, will you be my true friend? You may not believe, or wish to believe, as I do; but you will feel for *me*, a seeker, like yourself, after God and holiness and life."

"Tell me," said the *faqír*, "what I can do for you, and I promise you faithfully and with all my heart that I will do it."

The boy then told him that he should beg him simply to keep his counsel and tell no one what he knew, and then to wait on, making some excuse to the family and begging a continuance of their charity until he should hear some further news from himself.

Very few words were exchanged further, and after renewing his earnestly spoken and very sincere promise not to betray in any way the young friend

who had by this time quite a warm place in his heart, the weary and oft-disappointed *faqîr* parted with him, following him to the end of the narrow *galli* by which he found his way to the street, and gazing after him with a wistful look which seemed to say, "Oh that I too might see some way to real rest and satisfaction!"

Muhkam Chand sped away with his heart full of conflicting emotions: *sorrow* that his going must mean separation from home and friends and all that he held most dear in the world, and *joy*—strange, quiet, restful, real joy, with no doubt about it notwithstanding its companion pain—joy that swelled higher and higher in the heart of the young follower of Jesus the nearer he felt himself to the time when he should publicly confess Him before men. He feared nothing as he pressed on in the stillness and darkness of the late summer night to the house of his Christian friend, who had promised to be ready to receive him at any moment, and ever and anon there welled up from his heart the cry, "Thine for ever!"

It was on the morning of the next day that little David heard the news of his becoming a Christian, and on that morning, too, that the news spread like wildfire through the town that one of the sons of Prem Chand, the goldsmith, had gone and joined himself to the Christians; and it was on the

evening of that day that we saw the schoolmaster returning dejected and sad to his home after trying to make matters straight for himself at the goldsmith's.

Muhkam Chand did not fail to write to his father a full and particular account of his own conversion and resolution to be baptized, adding his earnest desire to live and work at home as a dutiful son should do, if such a thing might be possible. He spoke very affectionately of the bitter grief of leaving those so tenderly loved, but reminded his father that he was of full age, and able to choose for himself about becoming a Christian.

Not one of his family appeared at his baptism on Sunday. It was thought by the Christians that this was because they really doubted the boy having courage so soon to appear in public for the ceremony; while some surmised that possibly they were not going to be hard upon him, and did not care what he did. But Muhkam Chand knew better than that, and he concurred in the opinion that they had doubted his really taking the step; but he felt sure that, when they found he had dared to do so, they would find some dreadful way of trying to make him feel their anger. When, however, he stood at the font for baptism there was one yearning heart whose sympathetic throbs were scarcely hidden by the yellow *faqír's* cloth of the

old man, who, crouching in a corner, listened eagerly to every word of the service, so strange, so new, and so wonderful to his ears; and one fervent cry at least went up to God for light and guidance, for peace and satisfaction.

After the service Muhkam Chand went away with Christian friends to spend a happy evening of prayer and praise; and it is no wonder that, among all the new songs in which he joined that night, none seemed to him more wonderfully appropriate to his case than these lines:—

"I CAME TO JESUS, AND I DRANK
OF THAT LIFE-GIVING STREAM;
MY THIRST WAS QUENCHED, MY SOUL REVIVED,
AND NOW I LIVE IN HIM."

CHAPTER VII.

CALLED IN COURT.

Fear not! for in His sight
Who ever liveth, and to whom shall daily prayer ascend,
Their blood is dear, and from all wrong and all deceit
He shall redeem their souls.
Think not He looketh on unmoved
The while that taunting heathen cruelly mock
The child of faith, and cowardly bearers of the Christian name
Stand by afraid to venture bravely
To defend His cause. Fear not! He shall redeem
The suffering souls now witnessing for Him;
And by the Blood He shed in love Himself,
Most precious in His sight shall be *their* blood.

MONDAY morning dawned, and a small number of Muhkam Chand's nearest relatives and friends came to see him. They had not really believed that he would take the great step of which he had spoken in his letter on Saturday, and their contemptuous disregard for what they considered a boyish freak had resulted in their absence from the ceremony of his baptism on Sunday. They had, indeed, from the moment of discovering his absence on Friday morning, been making and maturing plans for turning his thoughts in another direction as soon as they should have succeeded in persuading him to return

home, which, when their first anger and consternation had somewhat abated, they fancied would be a very easy thing to do. They could not even now believe that he had already eaten and drunk with Christians, for they imagined him a most strict and scrupulous Hindu; and as they had not the faintest idea of the length of time during which his mind had been deeply exercised on religious subjects, or of the way in which he had applied the whole strength of his understanding to the study of the Christian faith, or of the precious treasure he possessed in the Word of God, they felt sure that he was just yielding to a schoolboyish fancy for something new, or to some sudden pressure brought to bear upon him by Christians when he was foolishly excited at their meetings; and so they comforted themselves by supposing that in two or three days he would return home to laugh at it all with them. Thus they allowed Saturday and Sunday to slip by without any very resolute effort to induce Muhkam Chand to leave his new friends. On that Sunday evening, while the lad was rejoicing and singing songs of praise, a Hindu who had been present and witnessed the ceremony of his baptism was sitting at the goldsmith's house telling about it to the assembled family.

"And why did you not interfere, friend goldsmith?" asked the visitor as soon as he had finished

his story. "How came you all to be sitting here and saying not a word to prevent such a thing from being done? Why, if you had only acted promptly yesterday, making a good deal of fuss, and giving plenty of trouble to the Christians, especially if you had worked upon Muhkam Chand's feelings and affections in some way or other, you might have had him back and gained time to consider what to do with him; or, failing that, and supposing him to have been very obstinate, you might have had a warrant out against those in whose house he is staying, and brought them in court for 'unlawful detention of a minor,' thanks to the good English law! It may not be too late to try that plan now; though, of course, it is a terrible thing that the boy has been baptized and broken caste. *That* will cost you a considerable sum of money to set at all right. It *is* a sad matter."

Prem Chand looked a little doubtful during part of his friend's speech, and then he drew him aside and whispered something in his ear to the effect that he would find it difficult now to prove that his young son was a minor.

"Nonsense!" exclaimed his adviser. "Do not tell that to all the world; produce a *janam patri*, and get a *pandit* to read it for you in court, and it will be the easiest thing possible to prove the boy a minor."

"And when proved?" asked the father, who could see nothing just now but the difficulties of the case.

"Oh," said more than one sympathetic adviser, "the boy can be brought home and taken to the Ganges; and there the usual cleansing ceremonies can be gone through, and the usual dues paid to the Brahmans. But, alas! that you did not save yourselves so much trouble and expense by doing something yesterday! Still, do now all that you can, and delay no longer."

The old *faqír* was invited to share the confidence of the family, and to give such advice as he thought proper; and when he saw that they had no suspicion of his knowing anything of Muhkam Chand's leaving home, he resolved to stay on just as long as they made him welcome, that he might, if possible, see what would become of the boy, and perhaps get an opportunity of doing him a kindness.

A plan was then made that the goldsmith, with his elder son and one or two other members of the family, should go early on Monday morning and try the effect of persuasion and coaxing and fair promises upon Muhkam Chand, and they resolved to leave it to another consultation to decide what to do with him afterwards, supposing they were so happy as to prevail upon him to return home.

It was unanimously agreed that no show of anger,

no threats of punishment, should mark this first interview. Accordingly, very early on Monday morning, Prem Chand and his party arrived at the house which had been pointed out to them as the one where Muhkam Chand was staying. They were at once cordially invited to come in, and urged to see the lad and allow him to give them himself his own reasons for becoming a follower of the Lord Jesus Christ.

Muhkam Chand made a respectful *salám* to his father and father-in-law, and then tried to embrace his brother. This, however, the latter would not allow. The goldsmith began to weep, and to speak in very kind and affectionate terms to his son.

"Did you not receive my letter, father?" asked the boy.

"Yes," was the reply; "but I never believed that what you wrote could be other than some boyish freak and nonsense, about which you would change your mind as quickly as you seemed to have made it up; and, of course, I entirely discredited your statement that you would join yourself with Christians by means of their rite. Your whole family is simply heart-broken; your mother is smitten down with grief; your brother is bereaved; shame and sorrow and disgrace have come upon us all; but still we will not upbraid you or punish you. We will forgive all if you will only come home now and submit, as a dutiful son should, to the neces-

sary purifications, and show us that you are sorry for the foolish step which you have been so ill-advised as to take, and that you will repay all the very heavy expenses which you know must be undertaken for you, by never again allowing yourself to be drawn away by such false and pernicious doctrines as these to which you have now, in an unguarded moment, so unfortunately agreed."

Muhkam Chand remained, though not unmoved, yet quiet and firm during this address and through the burst of passionate weeping which followed it, and in which the whole party of Hindus joined. When at length there was a little quiet he spoke.

"Dear and honoured father," he said, "it cannot be. I told you, as in duty bound, that I was about to join the Christians, and that my baptism would take place yesterday in their church. You uttered no word to prevent this, and I proceeded to do as I had said I would. My Brahminical thread did not really proclaim me 'twice-born,' since the ever wearing of such a thing was only one among many absurd and useless ceremonies. I have studied the Word of God for a very long time, and by the power of that Word I have been indeed 'born again.' *Now* I am 'twice-born,' and He who has given me new life is Jesus Christ, whose I am and whom I serve. Oh! let me tell you something of Him, of His love and His——"

"Stay, stay!" interrupted his brother, almost forgetting, in his wrath, the agreement to let no anger be shown on this occasion; "we do not wish to hear you preach. We have come to remind you of your duty and your home. We are here not to listen to any new ideas about religion (concerning which *who can teach a Brahman?*), but simply to assure you that we love you still. This religion may be all very well for the English, but it can have nothing whatever to do with us; and deep indeed is our grief, my dear brother, that you should have yielded so thoughtless an assent to its principles and teachings. But still we love you. We want you home, and are willing to bear any expense or trouble to re-establish you among us. We have no wish whatever to make you unhappy; we are ready to forgive what you have so foolishly done, but we all implore you not to disregard what we say. Come home now with us, O my dear brother! without whom home is so desolate;" and once more the whole party, led this time by Nihál Chand, burst out into noisy weeping.

"If," added the father when this storm had somewhat abated, "your home is sad and wanting in companionship now that your young wife is dead, you know that we are at this very time trying to find you another. You will not have long to wait for your marriage; only, of course, it will be more

difficult *now* to complete negotiations with any good family since people have heard of this wrong step of yours. Still, we know such difficulties can be overcome, and I will spare no money."

Many more entreaties and expostulations and promises followed, and at length, with tears and prayers, the goldsmith clasped his boy in his arms. Christian friends waited by, doing nothing at all to influence the lad, only lifting up their hearts to God in secret prayer for strength and victory for him in this hour of sorrow. It is impossible to describe the distress of those converts who are compelled thus to witness the unhappiness of their friends, and who have to withstand affectionate and apparently fair promises. Many a time a convert has been convinced that all was true and that every promise would be kept, and some have acted in accordance with that persuasion, and been seen and heard of no more.

Prem Chand noticed his boy's firmness, and at length said, "Well, I see you would rather be a Christian, so come home with us and continue to be our dear, obedient son as before, and we will allow you to be a Christian, and if you like you shall have a Christian wife, as no doubt one has been promised you; and we will give you no trouble; you can go to your church and do all you wish; only come and live with us."

Another burst of grief followed this speech, and all the party agreed that this promise ought to be kept, and Muhkam Chand allowed to live as a Christian, if only he would come home.

But the newly baptized follower of Jesus stood bravely forward in the midst of his weeping relatives and said, "You know it *cannot be.* Have I not been a strict Hindu long enough to know whether or not a Christian man can live in a Brahman family? But I need not be cut off from you if you will let me come and go as a Christian. I shall get some employment to earn my living, and then I will keep my own little house, and come frequently to see you all. *Do not think,* I entreat you, that my love is less; I love you all, and I do long to see my mother, but I cannot be blind to the fact that Brahmans and Christians can never *live* together. Either you would have to lose caste, or I should be obliged to be false to my *Master.*"

"Master!" exclaimed his brother. "Have you, then, become any one's slave?"

"Yes, my brother; I have become the slave of Jesus Christ, and He is my only Master."

Finding all remonstrances and entreaties of no avail to change the purpose of the young Christian, the whole party retired for a while to consider what they had better do next. During the middle of the day, when nothing could be done, and the *faqír* felt

sure that he would not be called to any consultation, he went, in spite of the heat of the sun, to pay a visit to Muhkam Chand. After a grave *salám*, several moments passed without a word being spoken, and then the *faqír* sat down on the mat, and begging his young friend to do the same, said, "Well, what now?"

Muhkam Chand quietly replied, "All joy."

"Are you satisfied?" asked the old man, gazing into the youth's eyes with an earnest, searching look.

"Quite," was the steadfast, calm answer. "I thirsted till I came to Christ, but now my thirst is quenched."

"I believe *you* mean it," said the poor, weary old man; "but oh that I could believe it absolutely the truth for each and all, for every thirsty one, for all the dissatisfied!"

"Of that, too, there is no possible doubt," said the boy, and his face glowed with honest joy at thus being able to tell some one else of the peace and rest which he had found; "that which has made *me* happy and satisfied can quench *your* thirst also, and give you peace and joy. Jesus Christ is able and willing to save *you*."

"But stay," said the old man; "let us not speak of this any further just now. I want to tell you that your family will have a *panchâyat* this day, and will talk over all your case, and I believe they

will take some severe measures for compelling you to return to your old religion. To their counsels they have called me, and I want to know how I can best serve you. Confide your plans to me; I will not betray your secrets."

"I have no secrets," said the boy, "and as yet I have made no plans. I only desire to live for Jesus Christ, and, of course, I should be willing to try in my dear old home, if I felt it possible; but, alas! I know too well that it is *not;* and it is, I need not tell you, utterly out of the question for me, a Christian, to conform to any of their customs, or to do *púja*, or observe any idolatrous festivals, &c. I cannot be anything except a Christian."

Dear lad! he spoke bravely, and his heart felt brave and strong. Did he forget his father's story of the boiling oil? Perhaps, when he allowed himself to think of that and similar cruelties which he knew had been practised on those who had left the religion of their fathers, he may have felt his heart quail, and he may have wondered if he would have the courage to face even death for Jesus' sake.

The *faqír* spoke very few more words to the boy, and when the Christians living in the house asked him questions which seemed to him likely to lead to the subject of religion, he abruptly said that he must go, and rising and making a *salám* to all present, turned towards the road and was soon lost

to sight, leaving on the minds of Muhkam Chand's Christian friends the impression that he was a spy on behalf of the goldsmith's family, with the object of persuading the boy, if possible, to leave the faith he had so recently embraced.

On this supposition, they began earnestly to caution Muhkam Chand against listening to anything such a man might have to say to him; but Muhkam Chand answered, with a quiet smile, "Oh, he is all right; he will do me no harm."

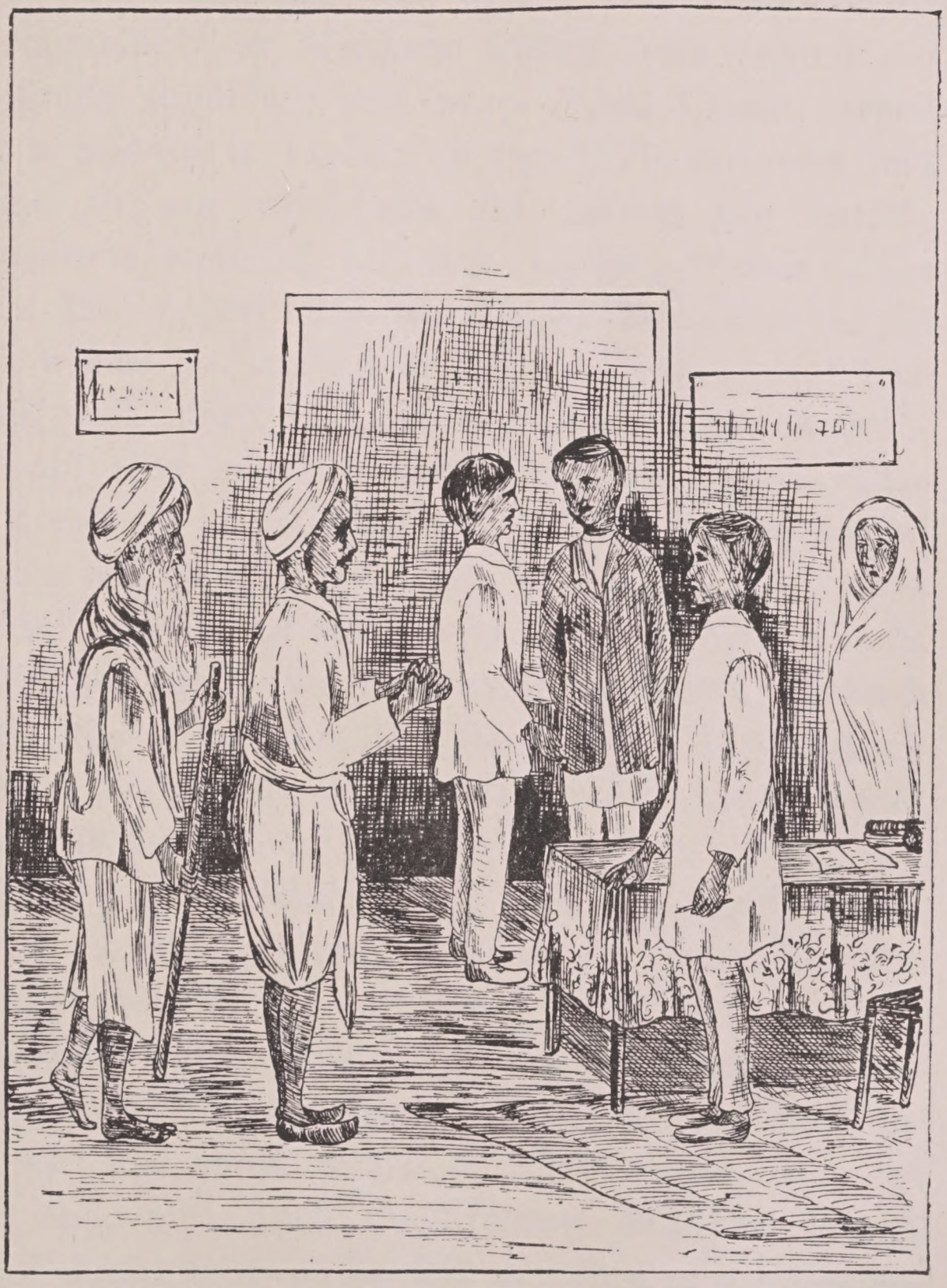
In the evening a very large gathering of relatives and friends might have been seen at the goldsmith's house, among whom the *faqír* did not fail to appear. After much talk and many angry words, and when more than one had eagerly and impatiently suggested an immediate summons in court for the Christian in whose house Muhkam Chand had been found, it was proposed as a preliminary step to try some of the other artifices which persons present knew had been successful in similar cases elsewhere. It was, accordingly, agreed that some one should go at once to Muhkam Chand and give him the sad news that his mother had been taken suddenly and alarmingly ill, and that the *hakíms* did not expect her life to be prolonged more than a few hours at the most. The next question was, Who should go to carry the false news? The goldsmith glanced at the *faqír*, and then made a sign to Nihál Chand,

who, quickly understanding it, took the *faqír* aside and begged him to be the messenger. But the poor old man pleaded that he felt quite unequal for such a task, and he begged to be excused, adding, however, that he would gladly accompany any one else on the errand who would undertake to be responsible for carrying the whole plan through. Nihál Chand upon this agreed to go himself, and take the *faqír* as a companion and assistant.

This being settled, they started together, and on reaching the house of Muhkam Chand's Christian friends, were at once shown into the room where the lad was sitting trying to study, so as not to lose time during the few days that his advisers thought it better for him not to attend public school. No sooner did Nihál Chand see his brother than he began to howl and lament and smite his breast in most distracted fashion.

"*Hae! hae!*" he cried, "to think that anything so terrible should have happened! Our mother is dying. A sudden illness has nearly torn her from our arms of love; there is no hope of her life. *Hae! hae!* but she does long for a sight of you, her younger son, once more. Come, oh! come without a moment's delay, lest it should even now be too late. *Hae! hae!*"

The *faqír*, having been previously enjoined by Nihál Chand to take his part in this terrible lament,



"Our mother is dying. Come without a moment's delay."—*Page* 126.

did indeed come in with a somewhat feeble "*Hae! hae!*" now and then, but at the same time nodded encouragingly at Muhkam Chand from behind the brother's shoulder; and when Nihál Chand turned for a minute to explain to two Christians who had come to see what was the matter the terribly dangerous state of his sick mother, Narain Dáss took the opportunity to whisper hurriedly to the lad whom he was so anxious to serve, "Not true —all well—don't come home;" and again the faithful old man stood at Nihál Chand's side in time to come in at every suitable pause in the recital of the sad story with "*Hae! hae!*"

Muhkam Chand told his brother at length that he could not come thus, but would send some one back with him to inquire into the state of his mother's health, and would decide afterwards what it would be right for him to do.

In the end Nihál Chand and the *faqír* had to return to the goldsmith's house to report that the stratagem had not succeeded.

During the day other and equally disturbing and trying attacks were made upon the lad, but the longest and most wearisome day passes away at last, and, with much thankfulness, Muhkam Chand found himself at night left at peace and quietness by his family, who perceived that all their ingenuity and cunning had failed.

The next morning the friend with whom Muhkam Chand was staying received a summons to appear in court the following Saturday, and to "produce the infant son of Prem Chand, the goldsmith." A prayerful and anxious consultation was held by the little band of Christians, and several came to the house where he was staying to offer the newly baptized boy advice as to what he had better do. Some warmly recommended that the young convert should at once go away quietly and keep himself in hiding for some time—say a few weeks or months—until the anger of his family should have somewhat abated, and they should be willing (as, it was urged, had often been known to happen in similar cases) to allow him to follow his choice and obey the dictates of his conscience without molestation.

"But why run away and hide," argued others, "when Muhkam Chand is of age and at full liberty to choose his own religion? He has but to appear in court and state his age and his own reasons for deciding to be a Christian, and all will be well."

Among other advisers was a lawyer who looked very wise and important, and to him several turned for advice—"What is *your* opinion, Bábu Dáss?"

"Well," he replied thoughtfully, "it is difficult to say how things may turn out. You see, one never knows how a case may go. First of all the age will be certainly questioned; and not only ques-

tioned, but sworn to be much less than it is; and, let me see, my boy, how old do you say you are?"

Muhkam Chand replied in a manly way, "I know I am over eighteen years of age, and it will surely be impossible for any one to prove me younger."

"Alas!" said his questioner, with a lawyer-like caution and a quiet, meaning smile, "you do not know what can be proved until you try. Suppose, now, that your own father should swear you sixteen?"

"But can such gross injustice ever be allowed in an English court of law?" exclaimed an English missionary who had not been long in the country.

But the native Christians knew only too well how such things are managed, and they could not help looking at each other with a good deal of anxiety and bewilderment as to how to advise their young friend.

"But, Bábu Dáss," said the missionary, "is there not some clause about 'age of discretion,' owing to which, even supposing the lad were apparently proved under age, he could yet be declared by the judge able to choose for himself?"

"Ah," said the lawyer, in a slow, cautious way, "there is such a clause, certainly; but don't depend on it. Don't be too sanguine. It all rests with the judge, and in a case connected with Christianity he is not a bit likely to make any allowance

unless a boy said to be a minor seems to him exceptionally manly, and" (glancing at Mohindránáth Chakkarbatty, the schoolmaster) "I should not say —should you?—that this is a remarkably discreet boy."

"Well," answered Mohindránáth, glad to find a sympathetic friend, "it would have been more discreet to have waited a little before taking the important step of becoming a Christian. It is a great pity he was hurried into it. There is really nothing gained by it, and we are all in this mess."

Muhkam Chand heard and wondered. What! were Christ's own people *sorry*, then, that he had had grace to come to the Saviour, and then to confess Him before men? He felt a pain in his heart; his head sank; he looked very sad and downcast, and for a few moments he could scarcely think. But he was cheered by hearing another Christian say, "Allow me to explain. No one hurried this dear lad into his decision for Christ. He was brought to choose the blessed service of Jesus after a long time of earnest study of God's Word for himself, and we should all be rejoicing and giving thanks together over the emancipation from the slavery of his old life as a Hindu of this brother who is now among us in the glorious liberty of the children of God. Let us by no means discourage him; he needs all our help and prayers, and by God's

grace he will be brought safely through this time of trial."

"I'm sure I wish you well through it," said the lawyer. "I would advise your turning up in court all right, and not arranging any running away. Once in court, the boy will have to take his chance. You have nothing to do but produce him, and the judge will decide the case entirely on the ground of age, and give an order what is to be done. I'll do anything I *can* for you, though I am afraid that will not be much; but, anyhow, I wish you well out of your trouble."

The lawyer then went home, inviting the schoolmaster to walk with him, and soon afterwards the remainder of the little company dispersed.

Alone with his kind host—a native Christian in humble life—and with the young evangelist who had been the first glad hearer of his decision for Christ, Muhkam Chand begged again for their earnest prayers that the gracious and merciful Lord would so order all the circumstances and events of the coming Saturday as to let all turn out for the good of His tried child and for His own glory. He confided to his kind friends much of what he felt in the separation from all his family, and in facing the positive dangers which he knew too surely awaited any Hindu who forsook the religion of his fathers.

Those who listened to his confidences knew full

well that his fears were by no means groundless, and during the week they more than once became aware of plots for snatching away the new convert on the road to and from church and the evangelistic services, from none of which could he be persuaded to absent himself. He went bravely everywhere, and was even amused because his friends begged him to have always with him one or more strong enough to help him in case of need. They knew his danger better than he did.

Three or four times during that week he visited his little blind friend David, who was so happy he scarcely knew how to contain his joy. In that joy his mother and sisters were sharers, and when daily the good Bibi gathered her three children for prayer and praise, Muhkam Chand's name was earnestly and with much feeling remembered. They all longed for Saturday to be over, and all prayed that the dear lad might be left free to serve God as a Christian.

Alas that the master of that little household should have been a stranger to their joy! Well might his anxious wife plead with tears as she knelt alone in prayer—"O gracious Redeemer! give *him*, too, to drink of the water which Thou givest, that it may be in him a well of water, springing up into everlasting life!" Deeply did the poor Bibi feel the sad want of sympathy shown by her husband in this matter of the new convert and his baptism, and

truly did she mourn that, in her own joy with her three children over the happy boy who had so lately confessed Christ before men, she was, as it were, almost acting against one whom she would have delighted to honour in everything. But she felt she must honour God at whatever cost; and always believing that the day would surely come when she would see her husband drinking deeply of the well-spring of immortality, she comforted herself with the thought that in those better and happier days she would tell him all, and confess how she could not in her heart fully honour his every wish while he kept aloof from the grandest work on earth, the work of making known to perishing heathen the wonders of redeeming love.

On Friday night Muhkam Chand paid a last visit to the good Bibi and her three children. For a time she read to and instructed them all, and then they knelt together in prayer, and finally sang several hymns, little David, at Muhkam Chand's request, concluding with his favourite one, "I've found a Friend." The song ended, the lad rose to go, and just then the schoolmaster entered the house.

"Ah!" he said, "I am glad I just happened to see you. Please remember, when you are in court to-morrow, whatever you are asked, you are not to say anything to lead people to suppose that *I* tempted

you away from your father's house or made a proselyte of you."

"Oh no, sir!" replied Muhkam Chand, with perhaps unconscious sarcasm; "I am sure I will never tell such a falsehood; for, indeed, sir, you never tried in any way to make me a Christian."

It was only the simple truth spoken by an ingenuous boy, but the schoolmaster felt somehow as if he had been hit very hard.

David's mother managed to say to Muhkam Chand as she closed the door behind him, "Remember, my son, if you are in trouble or danger, run here. This is your home whenever you want one, and here you shall be in safety and not lack a mother's love and care. God bless you and help you through to-morrow."

The morrow came, and found the so-called "kidnapper" and the so-called "infant" waiting quietly in their places in a little room off the court of the judge who was to try their case in *Kachery*. Outside that *Kachery*, seeking shade as best they might from the glaring sun, under the scant trees or in the crowded verandahs, there were plaintiffs, defendants, and witnesses, apparently without number or end. It would have puzzled any ordinary observer to find out what the majority of these people meant or wanted as they argued and quarrelled and gesticulated and harangued each other. In many

hands there might be seen a stamped paper held in readiness for the drawing-up of some official document. It might refer to the disposal of a house or a field, to the adoption of a child, or to the divorce of a wife. It might be a most trivial or a most important case, but the volubility with which the holder of such a paper would discuss the merits of his whole matter with any one who happened to be sitting or standing near him, friend or foe, would certainly be no trustworthy guide as to the weight of those merits.

Every now and then a *chúprássi* from one of the courts would rush out and frantically "call on" a case, hustling and bustling over the parties concerned in a manner which made even that fierce Panjáb day feel hotter; and now the interests of several little groups of expectants would be momentarily centred in that case, but very quickly each group would return to its own wrangles and gesticulations and explanations. And thus the day would wear on, till all these "small-cause cases" had been attended to and settled or postponed; and in the stifling evening some would go away as yet unheard who had sat in those noisy, weary, hot precincts since early dawn, and had taken no food or rest the live-long day.

Muhkam Chand and his party were soon called before the magistrate who was to decide their case.

Numbers of friends had accompanied Prem Chand to the court, and, of course, they were very bustling and talkative, putting many questions to each other, and to strangers too, and delivering themselves of many profoundly learned opinions as to the folly of a minor venturing to wish to change his religion, adding, of necessity, many declarations of what would certainly have been the result had the boy been *theirs!* Why, they would have suspected things long ago; would have watched and warned the boy; and, if needful, would have sent him far enough away to some relative or friend to get him out of the reach of Christian influence. What had Prem Chand been thinking about, with his eyes shut! It behoved people to have their wits about them now-a-days, when the nets of Christians were spread everywhere. But there, this unfortunate matter having occurred, it was no use fretting; the thing was to *act.* The boy was, of course, under age? Oh yes! there were *pandits* there to prove *that,* and many a sly wink and nod of the head might have been noticed as these bigoted old Hindus chuckled together over the certainty of the boy's being proved a minor.

"*The* vexatious part of it all is," said one, "that he has *been baptized.*"

"Yes," said another; "and doubtless he has eaten beef."

"Oh yes, of course," chimed in a third. "Why, that is a part of the ceremony."

"These matters will not get set right again without an enormous expenditure of money," was the opinion of one old *kapra-wala* with a hard, money-loving face.

"Oh, never mind *that;* the goldsmith will, of course, spend anything," said another, whose heart had not been quite so hopelessly eaten out by the greed of gain. "What, after all, is money compared with a son?"

"How much is it likely to cost altogether?" questioned another bystander.

Several who were learned in such matters began to run hastily over items of expense, as journeys to Ganges, numbers of cows for the Brahmans, numbers of anna-pieces to be paid for prayers, at an anna each, some prayers requiring to be repeated thousands of times, meals for the Brahmans, feasts for the poor, *ghí,* oil, rice, &c., for temple offerings; many speaking at once and interrupting each other dreadfully, while all who had nothing more clever to say frequently broke in with, "*Rám, Rám,*" &c.

"Silence!"

The case was called on, and very briefly stated, and a Hindu lawyer with a most wicked face was soon sarcastically plying Muhkam Chand with questions. But the magistrate interposed—"Order!"

Order in small-cause courts in India seems to the unaccustomed ear and eye of the casual visitor to be one of those things about which there is more than a doubt whether they will come when they are called. But by dint of making a great deal of noise himself, and bringing his fist down upon the table a good many times, the magistrate succeeded in keeping sufficient order to ensure a hearing of the different parties concerned. He then remarked that the case was one of the simplest kind; the boy had left home without the consent of his father, and had received baptism and stayed in the house of some Christian; that he had now been produced by order of the court; and he, the magistrate, must say he was glad that the Christians had been wise enough thus to produce him when required; but as the father asserted himself able to prove the boy's minority, he hoped that there would be no fuss made about his going away quietly with his family and friends.

Muhkam Chand, having been given leave to speak, said bravely, "But, sir, I am not a minor; and I can only go with my father on condition of being allowed full liberty to live as a Christian should."

Looks of anger and bitter hatred were not enough at this juncture to satisfy the hearts of the excited Hindus, who were earnestly leaning forward and stretching their necks to hear every word spoken by

Muhkam Chand; those looks of hatred began to be once more accompanied by angry, eager words as the swaying crowd with turbaned heads pressed nearer, and seemed, every man of them, as though to carry the brave boy off and tear him limb from limb would be the greatest delight and honour possible.

"Silence!"

The magistrate again quieted down the uproar, and the case went on.

"You say you are not a minor, Muhkam Chand; and, of course, if you could prove that point you would be free by law to go where you liked, and to hold any religious opinions in the world; but the question of your age must be referred to your father."

Prem Chand was accordingly called and questioned as to the age of his son, whom he promptly and unhesitatingly declared to be fifteen years of age!

An expression of amazement passed over the face of the missionary, who had never before witnessed such a scene, and he was about to speak impetuously, when a friendly lawyer warned him that it would do no good, but, on the contrary, damage the cause. "Leave the case entirely to justice," he whispered.

"Justice!" exclaimed the missionary under his

breath, and with undisguised sarcasm in his tone. "Where is justice?"

The case proceeded. A *pandit* was put forward as a witness by Prem Chand, and he affected to read the boy's *janam patri*, which had been placed in his hands by the wicked-looking Hindu lawyer. He put on a very wise and mysterious air while reading, and ultimately declared Muhkam Chand to be just fifteen years old.

On the magistrate asking Muhkam Chand if he had anything to say, he replied that he should like his *janam patri* to be read by some other *pandits* who should be appointed then and there by the magistrate. This was agreed to, and two learned men were soon putting their heads together over the document.

As any one at all acquainted with such matters in India could easily have foretold, the decision of those grave *pandits* was, that fifteen years was certainly the outside of the age of Muhkam Chand.

Of course, a smile of exultation passed over the face of every Hindu present as the poor lad was asked by the magistrate what he had to say to *that*.

Muhkam Chand begged to say that, in all probability, the *janam patri* was one borrowed or written for the occasion, and that it could not be his if it made him out to be only fifteen. He would appeal to the Government school register,

where it would be found that at the age of nine years he was first enrolled as a scholar, and that the date of his first term at school would be found to be between nine and ten years back.

There was some excitement in court when this statement was made, and the goldsmith held a hurried consultation with the Hindu lawyer, who whispered a few words, with many nods of the head, to a brother lawyer, and then asked permission to speak.

Leave being granted, he said, "It seems to me not at all worth while to postpone this case just to make such a very unimportant inquiry. School registers are often untrustworthy, and it is not even certain that access to the books would be permitted. In addition to these considerations, we have the undeniable fact before us that the boy's *janam patri*, as read by competent witnesses now present, proves him only fifteen years of age; and I am further able to assure the Court, on behalf of my client, that the boy will have a most kind reception at home; no strictness will be shown to him, no reproach will be uttered. He will receive his old place as younger son in the household just as if nothing had happened; and should he wish to continue a Christian, his father will put no obstacles in his way. Two well-known Hindu gentlemen are prepared to be sureties for this, and to look after

the boy's interests, and duly report the case to this Court in the event of any harshness or unkindness being shown."

"There, now," exclaimed the magistrate; "what more do you want, my boy?"

"Sir," replied the poor lad, "I would rather not go home."

"But I am not going to ask you if you would *rather*. I am going to give you an order to go with your father; and I hope you will be a good boy and go at once, and not be so foolish as to make me obliged to punish you for contempt of Court."

"Punish, sir!" was the quick answer with a bright face. "Does that mean sending me to prison, sir? Oh, *do* send me to prison! I do not fear *that*. It is an honour to be punished for Christ's sake."

"Come, come," said the magistrate; "don't you talk about things you cannot understand. You're proved a minor, and you must go home with your father; but you need not be afraid. He is going to be as indulgent to you as ever, and if any one hurts you he'll be punished. Now, do as you're told, like a good boy."

"But, sir——"

It was of no use for the dear lad to raise his voice. He was overwhelmed by the numbers of Hindus, who speedily pressed around him and put

a wide barrier of their threatening, angry faces between him and his missionary friends, and bore him, by the sheer force of their own united movement, towards the door. He tried to struggle back to where the little Christian party stood, bewildered and in uncertainty what to do next. A scene would have ensued if he had obeyed the promptings of his brave heart and fought his way back; but the order rang out in a loud official voice, "Clear the court; bring on the next case," and the whole crowd of Hindus, with the smaller company of Christians, were unceremoniously hustled from the place.

"But the Lord reigneth!" said a Christian in an exulting voice in the verandah.

"*Does He?*" sneered the Hindu lawyer, whose curiosity had brought him to the door to see what would happen to the boy.

"Yes; and we are on the winning side," was the reply.

As the Christians drove away through the fierce sun they looked hither and thither for the brave lad, Muhkam Chand, but he was nowhere to be seen, and with sad hearts they returned to their homes. What would become of him? They trembled as they thought of possibilities, and their only comfort was in continual prayer for his release, and for such a renewed blessing upon his soul that in his time of trial and suffering, however long it might

last, the words might be fulfilled in his experience for God's glory—

"THE WATER THAT I SHALL GIVE HIM SHALL BE IN HIM A WELL OF WATER SPRINGING UP INTO EVERLASTING LIFE."

CHAPTER VIII.

AKBARPUR TO AMRITSAR.

And see we here
The Spring of life immortal? Now will I
Stand in these holy precincts and look on
The while these multitudes throng past,—will know
The utmost of *their* need by looking in, within
My own immortal spirit's inner place
Of silence! Thus discerning what *they* crave,
By knowledge of the thirst of this *my* soul—
Learn would I also what the utmost power
To satisfy of this so far-famed spring.
What can it bring or do which touches heart
And life with magic wand of comfort, fills
The empty voids, and heals the sores, and calms
The fear of sin-struck men, who hasten here
To find relief? And while I ask, I watch
These crowds who now with serious, earnest look
Press forward to their evening worship, cast
Their offerings on the silk-spread floor, prostrate
Themselves in presence of the holy Book,
Lay reverent hand upon the marble threshold,
And turn away (the rites performed) *unsatisfied!*
Again I look within, and know that grace
Has granted *me* (not for my own deserts,
For then had many in this earnest crowd
Been chosen rather!) to know the blessedness
Of carrying in my heart, for ever glad,
For ever satisfied—*the Well of Life!*
And while my soul sends up to Him a song
Of praise and joy, His love constrains my vow
That heart and life henceforward I will give
To the blest work of telling to these crowds
Of thirsty ones that *Jesus satisfies:*
He is the Spring of Immortality!

THE *faqír* had not failed to be present at the court on the day when the case of Muhkam Chand had been tried and decided. He was in a very anxious state of mind, scarcely knowing what to think, what to believe. He had seen enough of the dear, brave lad to feel no doubt that he, at least, was very happy in his new faith; and he had conceived a great affection for the boy, and began to feel as if he could not bear to be parted from him again. The long-tried, desolate, weary heart had found at length something to love; and, even more than the poor old man realised, this happy, ardent young life had intertwined itself with his own, and the boy had crept into the place in his affections which had been so long empty. Not that Narain Dáss was as yet wholly convinced that the ardent young professor of a new faith was *right;* on the contrary, he would often sigh to himself over the step, which seemed to him to have been so hastily taken, by which all this trouble had come about, and in consequence of which, no matter how much money might be expended, and in spite of all efforts which might be made, the boy could never again be entirely reconciled to his distressed family or recover his standing as a *pakka* Hindu. "But, on the other hand," the old man would reason with himself, "he found no rest or satisfaction for his soul in the religion of his fathers, and can I blame him for feeling out

after God in every possible direction? Have I not done it myself? Have I not travelled and toiled and prayed and fasted, and found, after all these years, no satisfaction? Have I not honoured the *Vedas*, carefully repeated the *mantras*, visited sacred rivers, afflicted my body while observing rules with regard to painful positions in holy places where I have stayed, consulted *faqírs* of devout and austere life, whose asceticism has been the wonder and admiration of more ordinary mortals, and yet found myself drawing near to the end of this stage, this weary and disappointed period of my existence, without peace and satisfaction of mind? This dear lad seems now satisfied and happy; might *I* have found all of which I have been in quest, if I had sought it in the Book of the Christians and in fellowship with them?" He would talk thus with his own heart, and then try to put away all thought on the subject; for joining the Christians had for him a meaning naturally born of his religious training and lifelong devotion as a Hindu, which made him for the present utterly unable to see anything but weakness and degradation in embracing such a faith.

So the poor old man was "tossed about with many a conflict, many a doubt;" while holy humility and triumphant faith had not as yet come in to lead him, *just as he was*, to the "Lamb of God."

No sooner was the scene in court ended than he made his way with all speed to the house of the goldsmith. On his arrival he found that the family had already returned from court, and all were gathered together, with many friends and acquaintances, in one of the open spaces of the house. Many inquisitive and not a few officious neighbours were standing about in the *galli*, and even in the wider *bázár* near there was quite a little crowd. Each eagerly discussed all that had happened, and there was such a Babel of voices that it was not possible for any one person to be heard by the rest. Notwithstanding this, each tried to make his own sentiments known and understood, and each had what he considered a learned opinion to offer on the subject in hand.

The *faqír* pressed through the crowd, and entering the goldsmith's house, was soon seated among the many relatives and friends who surrounded Muhkam Chand.

The boy looked tired but not unhappy, and on the entrance of poor old Narain Dáss a smile of pleasure passed over his face.

The family scarcely seemed to know what to do next; they had been to court and gained their point, but now they had to face some anxious problems, and as they sat thinking over these there were far less confusion and talking than among the crowd outside. Every now and then some neighbour would

look in and address a few words to the goldsmith; some who were previously acquainted with all the circumstances would say, "Well, brother, so you have been successful in getting back your son?" and others, who had not before fully understood how matters were, being perhaps from a distant part of the town, or even strangers from neighbouring villages who happened to be passing by, and who had not been able to satisfy their curiosity by questioning the people in the *galli*, would ask, "What is the matter?" and after hearing as much of the story as the jaded and not very happy Prem Chand or his elder son cared to tell them, they would glance round the place, look with scorn on Muhkam Chand, and depart saying, "*Rám, Rám!*" or, if they happened to be Mohammedans, "*Taubá! Taubá!*"

Doubtless they were soon absorbed in far more pleasing and engrossing business in the *bázár*, and thought no more of the goldsmith and his trouble. The day wore on; the numbers of inquisitive visitors and neighbours gradually decreased; the family whose affairs had afforded this little extra excitement and amusement or interest was left in peace and quiet, and serious indeed began to be the question what was to be done with the boy whom father and brother had been so exceedingly anxious to bring again to his home. He was hungry and thirsty; so were they all. Food must be prepared, but he could no more

be allowed to touch their eating or drinking vessels; and, in fact, until he had been purified it was impossible for any of them, without defilement, to have anything to do with him. He was left at a safe distance from their cooking place and utensils, and while one ate the rest carefully watched him. An earthen vessel, such as is used by the sweeper caste, was then procured, and some one placed it near him and filled it with water while standing at a good distance from anything so defiling as a Christian! Some food was thrown to him by his once affectionate brother, with the epithet "Christian dog!"

"Alas!" thought the *faqír*, "is this the kindness promised and guaranteed in court to-day, upon the understanding of which the boy was given up to his father? But, of course, I know it always must be so in this sort of case in our good Hindu families."

The quiet, peaceful look on the lad's face struck him wonderfully, as he thanked his brother for the food, and then, with an expression of gratitude to God, drank water from the earthen cup which proclaimed his degradation to the level of the outcast sweeper.

The *faqír* resolved to tarry a few days to see what would become of Muhkam Chand, and how the family would settle the difficult questions where to keep him, how to effect his thorough purification,

how to ensure his not leaving them again, and meanwhile—how to feed him!

The high-caste Hindu who has been baptized and has eaten with Christians is never really restored to all the privileges of a Hindu, never regarded by his family (if they be strict) as wholly and thoroughly cleansed; hence, in a successful attempt to get back a member of the family who has become a Christian, they bring upon themselves great expense and an infinite amount of trouble and annoyance in all the relations of life and in all dealings with others of their caste, as well as in all religious ceremonies, &c.

This is the case even if the person be an apostate from the Christian faith, and quite as eager as his friends about regaining his position as a Hindu; but if they are using force when they have every reason to know that he is at heart a Christian, and only kept from rejoining Christians as long as his relatives can be sufficiently clever and watchful to prevent his going away, while he never lends himself in any way to the means they employ for undoing (as they consider) his baptism, and restoring him as far as may be to the privileges and rights of Hinduism, the case becomes immeasurably more difficult, and there is no end of the expense and trouble to which a Hindu family under such circumstances will be put.

A few days passed away. The goldsmith tried every argument which he thought likely to have any avail with his son; and many learned *pandits*, as well as relations and friends of every degree, visited and argued with the boy. All attempts to make him *willing* for any ceremony of purification having failed, and his resolution apparently growing stronger with opposition and argument, his imprisonment and treatment in general began to be more severe. The *faqír* saw the chain of cruelty and persecution tightening day by day, and more and more his heart was drawn towards the brave, calm boy, who alike to threats and promises, to heartrending representations of his mother's ill health and probable early death in consequence of his defection—a specious invention—and to repeated appeals to the antiquity and holiness of the *Vedas* and the reverence with which he ought to regard the religion of his fathers, only unfalteringly answered, "I have *found salvation*, and I am henceforth the willing slave of Him who saved me. He can make me so strong that I shall not fear death, and He will never leave me nor forsake me; and if I could only live among you as a Christian, I am sure I could promise to be your affectionate and obedient son and brother."

Poor boy! he knew too well it *could* not be; it was hoping against hope to expect that as a follower of Christ he could ever remain an inmate of that

Hindu home. As long as Hindu customs, thought, and religious feeling are what they are, it is simply impossible for any Christian to be a member of a Brahman family.

In the case of Mohammedans the *spiritual danger* to a young Christian living as one of the family would be great indeed, but there would be no impossibilities as to his food and companionship, and the relations would lose no caste by having a Christian son and brother among them; but with Hindus it is utterly different, contact with Christians, and especially eating with them, being defiling in the extreme.

Muhkam Chand's father was very much troubled and worried by his relatives as to what he was going to do, while *pandits* and Brahman priests showed much anxiety regarding the steps to be taken for ceremonial purification, the carrying out of which would of necessity bring not a little wealth to some among them.

Prem Chand became more and more wretched the more he consulted with and was questioned by Brahmans, and at length he was so moody and sullen that the *faqír* and his elder son began to fear for his health and reason, and they both urged him to act in some way so as at once to set his mind at rest.

Nihál Chand advised a journey to Benares, with as

expensive, and therefore efficacious, cleansing ceremonies as could possibly be effected by the family, into compliance with which he declared Muhkam Chand must simply be forced. The *faqír's* advice was different. He was for allowing Muhkam Chand more liberty, and showing him much love, deferring for a time any expensive ceremonies, which, he very fairly argued, would be all only so much waste if Muhkam Chand remained in the end so determined to be a Christian, and took the first opportunity of publicly announcing his opinions as unchanged by all his father's persuasions.

"This," said Narain Dáss, "you know he can very well do as soon as he begins to show his age a little more and make it evidently an indisputable fact that he has attained his majority; for, of course, he is really over eighteen years of age already."

To this the goldsmith murmured a sad assent. Yes, his age could certainly not *long* be disputed; and, besides, if he found means to go to court and state his views, and complain that during these few days he had been kept a prisoner in his father's house, the law would set him free to do as he liked.

Prem Chand was terribly puzzled, and towards evening he went to consult two Brahmans whose opinion he had sought before, always with the result that he came home heavy-hearted and in great dis-

tress. Narain Dáss questioned Nihál Chand as to what advice these Brahman priests had given, but he appeared to know nothing, and Narain Dáss was left to draw his own conclusions. His mind, as he lay on his bare *chárpaie*, thinking and wondering, reverted to his childhood's days, and he seemed to feel again the same kind of indescribable horror as that which had taken possession of him when he had missed his new-born little sister and heard his young mother's desolate cry; while somehow or another the fancy grew upon him that the goldsmith's look when he returned from his visits to these particular *pandits* bore a strange resemblance, in its settled, horror-stricken despair, mingled with bitter resolution, to that of his own father on the day of the murder of that hapless female infant! The *faqír* pondered, and his heart grew more and more heavy as the thought took shape that possibly the wretched father was being persuaded to take a terrible way out of what he considered his difficulty and disgrace. "Could it be?" he questioned over and over again. "Yes, yes; it is only too possible," was always the answer he returned to himself. The next question was, What should he do? Though he was by no means prepared to accept at once all Christian *teaching*, he was day by day more deeply impressed with what he saw of one Christian *life*, and more warm grew his sympathy with the boy as he witnessed his

patient endurance of cruel taunts and indignities; while less and less did he feel in touch with the rest of the family as he saw the unreasoning enmity with which they persecuted the lad.

After much anxious thought the old *faqír* matured to the best of his ability a little plan for his own action, and then lay waiting the coming home of Prem Chand. He soon came, looking heavy-hearted and most miserable, and with him the two Brahmans.

"Friend goldsmith," said the *faqír*, "excuse my interrupting you now when you have apparently important business in hand, but I am wishing to continue my journey at daybreak, and am unwilling to leave your house without an expression of gratitude for having so long eaten your salt. I mourn very much that I can render you no help in the sorrowful state of your family. What course do you propose to adopt?"

Narain Dáss saw quick glances pass between the Brahmans and the goldsmith as the latter answered, "Ask me nothing. My sorrow, in all its depths, is not such as I can confide even to a holy *faqír* like yourself, father. You see but the outside; you cannot know what misery there is in my heart. But you *do* know full well that the gods are not to be lightly angered, and a Hindu father must remember that he is not *only* a father, but also a Hindu: the claims of religion come first; the sentiments of human affec-

tion must be considered only subordinate to them. Enough! May the gods help and favour me in my present distress; and do you, revered father, not fail to invoke a blessing for one so unworthy as I am of the remembrance of one of such eminent sanctity as yourself!" So saying, he made a respectful *salám* to the old man, and disappeared with his two Brahman friends inside the large court of his house.

Some time passed before the *faqír* could make up his mind to follow, and just as he had taken up his wallet in order to make the excuse, if noticed, that he wanted some food, the servant who always cooked the meals came out grumbling, and saying that he had to go to a *bázár* nearly a mile away to fetch some particular kind of *ghí*.

"Nay, do not grumble," said Narain Dáss. "See, if you will be quick and bring also for me some sweetmeats, which I shall accept from you with much pleasure, I will sit with you, and give you a blessing on this the last night of my stay in this place."

"Nay, but are you, then, going away?" questioned the man. "Then must I bring some offering for so holy a father, and you will honour me by remaining in the inner court, where, when all the family are gone to sleep, I alone remain with that Christian dog, and have to see that he does not get away."

"But where, then, is your brother, who usually remains all night to help you and keep you company?"

"Oh, he has fever, and I fear to tell Prem Chand anything, for I like not having strange men called in his place. If, therefore, he inquires to-night, I shall say, 'This holy *faqír* will keep me company.' But now I must indeed go, for they will be wanting the *ghí* and other things."

"For what are you fetching the *ghí?*" asked the *faqír*.

"Oh, it is for offerings to the Brahmans, who before leaving the house this night will do *púja* in the room where once that Christian dog used to sleep. They will watch in that room and do *púja* all night, so I have heard. I believe it is to propitiate the *deota* of the spot where the foolish boy first began to read Christian teaching. Alas! what misery has come upon this house!"

The servant went on his errand, and the *faqír* felt more than ever certain that his worst suspicions were only too well founded. He crept towards the inner court and hid himself in a dark corner, from which he could see all over the court and the cookhouse, and also could keep in view the door of the room in which Muhkam Chand was.

In the cookhouse were the Brahmans, and Prem Chand was not to be seen. The two priests spoke

scarcely at all to each other, and only now and then muttered a *mantra*. One of them was busily preparing something over the fire; the other sat on his heels looking on.

At length one asked, "Will Prem Chand not come back?"

"Not *here*," replied the other; "his heart is melting, and he has not the resolution to know any more. Presently we shall go and perform *púja* until dawn in the room upstairs, and you may be quite sure none of the family will come near this part of the house until we first return at about seven in the morning to do *púja* to *Shiv*."[1]

So the *faqír* found out exactly what he wanted to know.

Shortly after this the two Brahmans put a small quantity of cooked rice into the earthen dish used by no one in the house except poor Muhkam Chand, and then they retired to a little distance in the court, after most carefully washing the vessel in which the cooking had been done. When the servant appeared they blamed him for his delay, although, truth to tell, it had suited their purpose very nicely. The man made some excuse, and then asked them if he should take upstairs the things he had brought from the *bázár*, in order that the master of the house and his

[1] The god of death.

elder son might present it to them for doing *púja*. They agreed, but told him the boy Muhkam Chand had been calling for his evening meal (which was not true), and that he had better give it to him first. They keenly watched him place some more rice on the earthen plate and take a *chúpatti* and some water and go to the door of the small room where the boy was. He placed the plate inside and poured water out of his own brass *lota* into the earthen one of the lad, and then he carefully secured the door with a chain, and taking the things he had brought from the *bázár*, he made a low reverence to the Brahman priests, and was proceeding to show them the way upstairs, when they began to ask him questions about the boy's state of mind and about his health, keeping him waiting some time, and at length desiring him to ask Muhkam Chand whether he had enough for his evening meal. The reply was, that as yet he had not finished his food, but he would not require more, and he thanked the servant.

Narain Dáss was getting beside himself with terror lest the boy should finish all the rice, when he must certainly eat that which had been placed first on the plate by the priests, and which the *faqír* had not the slightest doubt contained some deadly poison. Oh that they would go upstairs! They went at last, and in a minute his aged limbs had carried him tottering to the little closed door. It was no time

for the boy's flight; the servant would return directly, and the outside world was still awake. No; all the *faqír* could do now was to put his lips close to a crack in the ill-fitting door and say, "*Eat no more;* it is poisoned, it will make you ill; try not to let yourself go to sleep." Narain Dáss regained his post of observation just as the servant returned to the court. After a few moments he came forward and asked for some food, presenting his wallet as usual.

"And now," he said, "I will come very soon to sleep here, for I am tired."

The servant began to eat his own evening meal, and then, when he had finished and cleaned the eating and drinking vessels, he fetched two *chárpaies* and placed them in the court near each other. The *faqír* came and lay down on one, and the man, having placed a small *chirág* in a niche in the hall and humbly desired the *faqír's* blessing, threw himself on the other, and was soon asleep.

The moments seemed like hours to the poor old man, who was tremblingly eager to be actively doing something for his young friend. Would any one come from upstairs to see whether the drug had taken effect? No; the Brahman priests had spoken very confidently about the whole matter. Prem Chand was not likely to come; and as for them, they would be doing *púja* all night—except when they were asleep. Deep, heavy breathing from that small, close

room warned him that there had been *some* effect from the poisonous dose, and that to get the boy out into the open air was now his most important work. He trembled to think that even now he might be *too late!* Presently he ventured on a prayer to One whom he had never addressed before, and like a child he whispered, "O Jesus Christ, he does love Thee; if Thou dost love the poor lad, save him now!" Then, rising and gently removing the chain, he opened the door of the temporary prison; and as he opened it the light from the little *chirág* fell on the lad's face, and showed that, though his sleep was heavy, it was not yet hopelessly deep.

"If I were only young and strong!" sighed the old man.

But without wasting another moment in vain regret he roused Muhkam Chand, who alarmed his kind friend by at once beginning to talk. Quieting and soothing while he wakened him, he half led, half dragged, the stupefied, stumbling boy across the court. The servant stirred not, and the two were soon in the outer court, from his little room on one side of which the *faqír* took his staff and an extra piece of cloth which he sometimes wore, but which now he wrapped round his nearly naked companion, and in two or three minutes more they were both in the *galli*. It was the darkest hour of night, just before dawn, and it was the quietest, too, for no one was stirring.

It was exceedingly difficult to keep Muhkam Chand on his feet, and the *faqír* had very little power to help him, while the poor boy often seemed to lose consciousness of his circumstances and to stumble on like one in a dream. Narain Dáss was very much afraid that daybreak would find them still in the streets, and the thought of Muhkam Chand's danger seemed to give power to his aged frame as he made for the house of the Christian with whom he had seen the boy just after his baptism. To his great thankfulness, they arrived before dawn, and having without any difficulty roused the inmates, who were sleeping in the open court, the *faqír* called for help, and in a few moments Muhkam Chand was lying on one of the *chárpaies;* while the old man, after entreating the Christian Bábu to close and fasten the door, attempted an explanation of this sudden appearance, and then fell nearly senseless on the ground by the side of the boy whom he had spent all his little strength in saving.

Measures were promptly taken for the restoration of Muhkam Chand and his deliverer; but it was a long time before the lad began to rally from the effects of the opiate, of which he had taken enough to throw him into a very deep sleep, though, happily, in consequence of the sagacious old friend's timely interposition, not a fatal dose.

As the day wore on, and Narain Dáss rested

near the young Christian, to whom now he felt bound by a closer tie than ever, friends discussed the best course of action for the safety of the convert.

Some were for prosecuting the father, who had so evidently been a party (according to the *faqír's* story) to the attempt to poison his own son, and thereby had broken faith with the magistrate before whom he had promised to treat the boy kindly.

Others said, No, it would do no good, and it would be exceedingly difficult to prove anything, as no one had actually *seen* any poison mixed with his food, nor had any one really heard Prem Chand declare himself about to take the cruel step. Suspicion might even be thrown on the boy himself by the crafty Brahman priests, and lies might be told to prove that he had been known to tamper with such drugs before or had often appeared to be of unsound mind; and there was no knowing what might be invented or done in order to get the poor lad back again into the hands of his relatives. Getting the father arrested on a suspicion of poisoning would be a very unwise proceeding on the part of the Christians, and would open the door to no end of craftiness; whereas if Muhkam Chand kept quiet, and simply went away to some other place for perhaps a few months, it was most likely that the guilty knowledge of what had been

attempted would keep all his family from coming forward or making any fresh effort to get him back, and meanwhile his majority would become in the eyes of all an undoubted fact, and he would be free. This very sound advice was unanimously accepted by Muhkam Chand's Christian friends, and they began to make all arrangements for sending him to Amritsar the next day, deciding without a dissentient voice that Philip Muhkam Dín, the Christian schoolmaster, just then stationed at Amritsar, should be asked to receive and shelter the dear lad for a time.

The *faqír* was very pleased when he heard this plan discussed and settled. "For now," thought he, "I can still visit that beloved city, and yet not be separated altogether from one who has become as son to me."

"And why," asked one, "are you so anxious, Bábá, to visit Amritsar again?"

"Because," said the old man, "I have been urgently advised to visit before I die the 'Well-Spring of Immortality.' I have already done all and everything which a Brahman can do in this life, and probably most men would feel more than satisfied, but there is still in my heart a want of satisfaction, and I have some friends of great sanctity among Sikh *faqírs*, who tell me at all events to visit the Sacred Tank and see how that 'Well-

Spring of Immortality' brings satisfaction to those who bathe and worship there. I can but see; there is nothing in the least defiling to a real Brahman in visiting any such holy spot."

"But, Bábá, have you not seen by all that Muhkam Chand has accepted and borne for Christ's sake, and by all his strength and joy ever since he came to Him for life, that he has found the true 'Well-Spring of Immortality'?"

But the old man, though he listened courteously to all they said, and with bowed head and reverential look sat quietly during their morning and evening prayers, did not respond to any of their assurances that in Christ and His salvation he would find peace and rest, but only shook his head and remained sad and silent.

When Muhkam Chand had slept long and had risen and taken a refreshing bath and some food, he was able to sit with his kind friends and join in the conversation, and it was with very affectionate looks that his old friend and deliverer regarded him and admired his appearance in the nice white Christian dress which had been provided for him.

Muhkam Chand warmly agreed with those who did not recommend prosecuting the goldsmith and making public the scandalous story of the attempted poisoning.

"No," he said; "I could never take part in any

scheme for bringing this matter home to my poor father. Must not his own sorrow and remorse (if, indeed, he lent himself to the wicked suggestion of the Brahman priests) be all too dreadful a punishment, and will he not himself be thankful some day that I escaped? May we not even see yet the glad day when my father and brother and I shall live together in love? God forbid that I should open my mouth to witness against them now. May He pity and save them!" With regard to the old *faqír*, Muhkam Chand begged his friends to say no more to him at present about Christianity; adding, "I am glad that I can go with him to Amritsar. I entirely trust him; he is a simple-hearted, child-like old man. Do not fear his ever being untrue to me; and do you all go on praying for him; I cannot but think that even yet, before he dies, God will guide his steps to the true 'Well-Spring of Immortality.'"

The goldsmith and his family, on discovering that Muhkam Chand was gone, were thrown into a state of great agitation and confusion, and the servant who slept in the outer court was eagerly questioned as to what had happened. He could give no satisfactory answer, and as he produced his brother, who had not slept there at all, and both together declared that they had kept watch in turns all night, and had seen no one come or go, it was quite impos-

sible to get any clue from him. The one who had secured the companionship of the *faqír* in order to cover the absence of his brother dared not tell this, which would have been against himself, but in his own mind he had no doubt at all that the *faqír* had been the one who released Muhkam Chand. Prem Chand and his elder son had their own reasons for keeping very quiet and appearing as unconcerned as possible, while the Brahman priests did special *púja* in different parts of the house, for which they received liberal pay, and then they advised that the "Christian dog" should be let go and no disturbance made about it.

Prem Chand strongly suspected that the *faqír* had had some hand in helping Muhkam Chand to get away, but he had too much fear of the old man's having understood his dark hints and being prepared to betray him, though it puzzled him sorely to think why a Hindu *faqír* of good caste and evidently strong religious convictions should not at the end of such a long life of devotion and religious duties be more averse to siding with outcasts. "There is no knowing," he said to himself; "the rascal may already have joined the Christian dogs, and this may be one of their tricks."

So the goldsmith and his family decided to leave Muhkam Chand to his fate, and they gloomily began to try to return to their various avocations.

Of the mother who shall write? Bereaved, at least for a time, of so dear a son, accepting the separation as a cruel decree of fate, and taught by the mandates of a relentless religion that it was a sacred duty to curse and hate one who was dearer to her than her own life, how could she be other than most utterly miserable? Such is the hard bondage of the votaries of heathen religions! Truly "the dark places of the earth are full of the habitations of cruelty."

Nearly two hours before daylight on the morning after that on which his escape had been effected Muhkam Chand and his old friend the *faqír* set forth on their journey to Amritsar. It had been decided not to take any conveyance until they were well clear of the town, and then to get an *ekha* on the road, and so proceed on their way. Two young Christian men accompanied them in case of any sudden attack and attempt to carry off Muhkam Chand, and also to bring back news of having seen them safely started on the *ekha*. Thus they set forth, and after resting outside the town at the distance of about a mile until day dawned, they soon were seated on an *ekha* and travelling towards the famous city of Amritsar.

The day was getting hot as they entered one of its gates and began to inquire their way to the house of Philip Muhkam Dín. The wide *bázár*,

which was the newest in the city, was less busy than it had been at an earlier hour of the day; for many tradesmen had closed and left their shops in order to go home to rest and sleep, and others were sleeping just inside the thick *chick* which, hanging in front of the tiny room dignified by the name of shop, does its part towards keeping out the all-too-busy flies and the intolerable glare of the sun.

There were very few people walking just now in this street, and those few hurried along under their umbrellas as if very anxious to return as quickly as possible to the shelter of some house.

If our travellers had gone on into less modern parts of the city they would have found narrower and therefore more sheltered streets, much more crowded also and busy, especially in the *bázárs* near the Golden Temple, where *kaprawalas* and other merchants allow themselves but scant rest at any time of the day in any season of the year; for, although their wealth is already almost fabulous, they grind and toil as though it would break their hearts to lose the chance of some paltry gain!

The weary travellers met with a most kind reception, and the *faqír* having been provided with a small outside room where he could live in his own style and not break caste, and Muhkam Chand affectionately cared for in the house, the day was spent (with intervals of rest) in much friendly talk and

in telling all the story of Muhkam Chand's baptism, of the attempted poisoning, and of his happy escape.

In the cool of the evening, after a walk through the again densely crowded and busy *bázárs*, Narain Dáss and Muhkam Chand stood together on the still burning marble pavement which surrounds on its four sides the Sacred Tank. They conversed quietly for some time, and the *faqír* showed his young companion the large and massively built houses which on nearly all sides complete the enclosure, the ground-floor rooms of which open on to the pavement or are provided with little balconies raised a few feet, where families of Sikhs sit and gaze upon the water. This may be regarded as the back of such a house, its front being in some street whence it would be approached by ordinary visitors.[1]

And below the level of pavement and Tank there may be found "Tae Kẖánas," or cold rooms, intended to be used as resting-places in the middle of hot days. Going down into these is very gruesome, and makes one feel like being taken down into a well. It is also generally considered extremely unhealthy to sit or sleep in such rooms,

[1] As a medical visitor I have often entered a large house in a *galli* leading off a *bázár*, and have been surprised, on going into the patient's room, apparently at the back of the house, to find a pleasant window overlooking the marble pavement and the Tank.—S. S. H.

on account of the chill feeling produced after the intense heat of the upper rooms and streets. Great families, *rájahs* and others, own and use these houses, and occasionally they are lent to people from a distance on grand occasions at the Temple, and the *rájah* of each large native Sikh state in the Panjáb has such a house on the border of the Tank, having nothing except the broad, beautiful, shining, marble pavement between it and the sacred waters. Some pious people have set apart certain large rooms for the sole use of *faqírs*, and it is considered a meritorious act to give fine skins of animals, as lions and tigers, to be also devoted to the use of these beggars for their comfort in sitting or in lying down to sleep. As many as five hundred *faqírs* may often be seen at one time taking advantage of this temporary dwelling-place in a vicinity so favourable to their—supposed—religious aspirations!

Muhkam Chand was extremely desirous to prevent his old friend from joining any *faqírs* who might happen to be there at that time, and he held him in conversation until it was growing dusk, and then suggested returning to their friend's house, adding that he was very glad not to have to find his way alone through the crowded *bázárs*.

Before they finally turned away they gazed again on the really picturesque beauty of the whole scene

—the long white stretch of marble pavement on all sides; the graceful *pípal* and *ním* trees growing here and there not far from the water's edge, in places which had, of course, been specially prepared for them between the pieces of marble; the pitiful sight of one or two aged men under such trees in some painful or fatiguing attitude gazing on the holy water, regardless of clothing or food, and only striving, by making their lives as wretched as they possibly could, to win favour and forgiveness and eternal life; that same holy water looking very pretty in spite of a certain coating of green scum which spoke of something not very conducive to health or cleanliness; the glittering dome looking exceedingly beautiful in the last rays of the evening sun; the long stream of men and women, some with such earnest "religious" faces, some with such wistful, searching, anxious looks, going on and on, inside that fine vestibule, along that beautiful marble pier, round to a side-door of that somewhat small Temple at the end, the marble threshold of which they devoutly salute, pressing their foreheads upon it, and then entering to listen for a few moments to the monotonous reading of the *Granth*,[1] to scatter a few cowries and flowers on the fine silk cloth spread on the floor in the midst on purpose to receive such offerings, and then returning by the

[1] Sacred book of the Sikhs.

pier to the outside marble pavement, and so away by some lane leading off between the large surrounding houses; away to their homes, away through the bustle of the city *bázárs*, away to life with all its joys and sorrows, its sins and sufferings; away —and are they satisfied with what they have done in those sacred precincts? It is to be presumed that, after a fashion, many *are;* but they must be the ones who have no real sense of sin, for when once *that* is felt, none of these things can ever satisfy. Thoughts somewhat like these filled the mind of Muhkam Chand as he turned to the *faqír* and said—

"Well, Bábá, is this more likely to help you than the Brahmans?"

"Let us speak of it another day, my son," replied the old man. "I am tired; we will go home and rest. I have at last gazed once more, as I so longed to do, on the 'Well-Spring of Immortality.'"

"No, no!" said the boy. "I wish you had. *I* have; and it is not like this!"

"And what is the difference?" asked Narain Dáss, standing still to have one more look before they turned away from the gilded toy of the Sikhs to wend their way through the noisy *bázárs.*

And the boy closed his eyes very reverently, and as if to shut out that miserable mockery called

the "Well-Spring of Immortality," and he said quietly—

"'AND HE SHOWED ME A PURE RIVER OF WATER OF LIFE, CLEAR AS CRYSTAL, PROCEEDING OUT OF THE THRONE OF GOD AND OF THE LAMB.'"

CHAPTER IX.

A CUP OF COLD WATER.

Surpassing love hath turned the key,
  Hath opened wide the gate,
Extending gracious help to me,
  Before it was too late.
And now a loving, tender hand,
  So firmly grasping mine,
Leads me within the open door
  Of all this love divine.

MUHKAM CHAND began to go to school with his kind host, and to live in his family as a son. It was considered an admirable plan that he should thus be so well cared for by a Christian friend whom he knew and trusted, and whose counsels had been valuable to him when he was a heathen boy; and it was a most happy coincidence that he could at the same time prosecute his studies, and thus be fitting himself for some employment or profession and earn his own living.

To the lad himself it was a great delight to learn once more under his old friend, and to converse with him on many subjects as they walked to and from school. Philip Muhkam Dín was now a widower,

and he had only two sons, the elder of whom was about the same age as Muhkam Chand. Both these boys were studying at the Government School, and their reception of their new companion was very cordial and happy. Muhkam Chand felt as if he should like to stay in such a home all his life now, and sometimes he was quite sad when he remembered that it was to be only temporary.

But he soon had a pleasure which made him forget everything at all sad; for one morning Philip told his boys that their aunt, little David's mother, was coming to Amritsar to bring her girls to school for their last term, and that before returning home she would come and spend a few days with them, and bring with her little David.

It was a very happy day for Muhkam Chand when the good Bibi and her little boy arrived; and David was as delighted as Muhkam Chand, and very proud to call him his big brother and to be quite inseparable from him except just during school hours, when he persistently asked his mother all day, "When will he come home from school?" and with great glee he found his way to the door when he knew it was time to await his return. Then Muhkam Chand had to listen and talk and play until he was tired, but it was nothing but a pleasure to him, so tenderly had he begun to love the blind boy, and so soothing to his heart, in his separation from all of his *own*

who were so dear to him naturally, was this clinging, trustful affection of the little David.

And where was Narain Dáss? He had not as yet left his kind friends; he seemed unable to make up his mind to do that, and he had even consented to a little regular instruction from the schoolmaster and Muhkam Chand every evening whenever he was at home; but he often stayed away for a day or two, and once Muhkam Chand's heart sank as he noted that they had seen nothing of the old man for four days. He might have been tempted to forsake Christian friends; he might have walked farther than his strength would permit of his doing with impunity, and he might be very ill or too feeble to return from some distant place; he might even be *dead!* When he came back that time Muhkam Chand reasoned with him, and begged him to discontinue his vagrant life and to take some very light post suited to his strength, such as *chaukidári*,[1] which would secure his daily bread and make his begging unnecessary; while still more earnestly did he entreat him to have done with all his efforts to gain eternal life meritoriously, and to accept Jesus Christ, the only Saviour! Philip Muhkam Dín also talked long and faithfully to the poor old man, and little David was not behind in his endeavours to forward the good work of the others.

[1] The work of a watchman, from *chaukí*, a chair, and *dár*, a mansion.

The child had singular influence with the *faqír*, and would sometimes keep him in conversation for an hour or two, persuading him to tell him over and over again about his little friend Shiv Jí of so many years ago, and about the glittering wares of the brass-workers' *bázár* in Benáres, and as many other of such things as the old man was willing to tell the child about his boyish days; and then he would say, "O Bábá! I am so sorry for you; your friends are all gone, and you must feel so lonely and sad. Would you like to hear again my song about my Friend?"

Yes, the *faqír* would always like *that;* and so he would sit and listen, and, unseen by the happy child, the tears would roll down his rugged face, and he would say in a whisper, "Sweet words; sweet words!"

Surely the light was slowly breaking on the old man's path, and a little child, who was blind to every other thing except that blessed light, was gently *leading him!*

David's mother was anxious to return to Akbarpur, but her journey was postponed on account of a slight attack of fever, which made the child so poorly for a day or two that Philip persuaded his sister to wait until he should be quite well again.

One morning some business required doing in connection with a branch school in a village a few

miles from town, and as it happened to be one of those numberless public holidays which set schoolboys at liberty for a walk or a day's pleasure, Muhkam Chand offered to go and be Philip's messenger. The season had changed, and a walk in the fresh, cool air was a great pleasure, and the old *faqír* offered to accompany him. This proposal, though quite acceptable to Muhkam Chand, put his walking out of the question, for in spite of the old man's fair and brave start, he soon began to show that his aged limbs could not carry him far. But Muhkam Chand cheerfully gave up his walk, and they took an *ekha*. Philip had told him that they would find only three or four Christians in that village, but could rest and get some refreshment at one of their houses before returning. Accordingly, when the business was done, Muhkam Chand began to look about for any house having the appearance of being inhabited by Christians, saying, "Bábá, let us get at least a drink of water, for I am very thirsty." The old *faqír* was getting careless about caste now, though he had never as yet eaten with Christians, and he had no objection to following Muhkam Chand to the door, opening into a clean, tidy little court, which was the entrance of a house pointed out to them by a passer-by as a place where Christians lived. A middle-aged woman who appeared was evidently a Christian,

and she at once asked Muhkam Chand whether she was not right in calling *him* one. And then she added, "Come in and rest. My father-in-law will be so pleased to see you. Are you long a Christian, or lately?"

Muhkam Chand was telling her as they crossed the open court that he had somewhat recently been baptized; but suddenly remembering his old companion, he exclaimed, "Oh! the *faqír* outside is a nice old man. I think you will allow him to come in and sit down a little to rest?"

"What! you have a *faqír* with you? Is he also a Christian? Oh! he must come in; my father-in-law is always very specially careful to show kindness to *faqírs*."

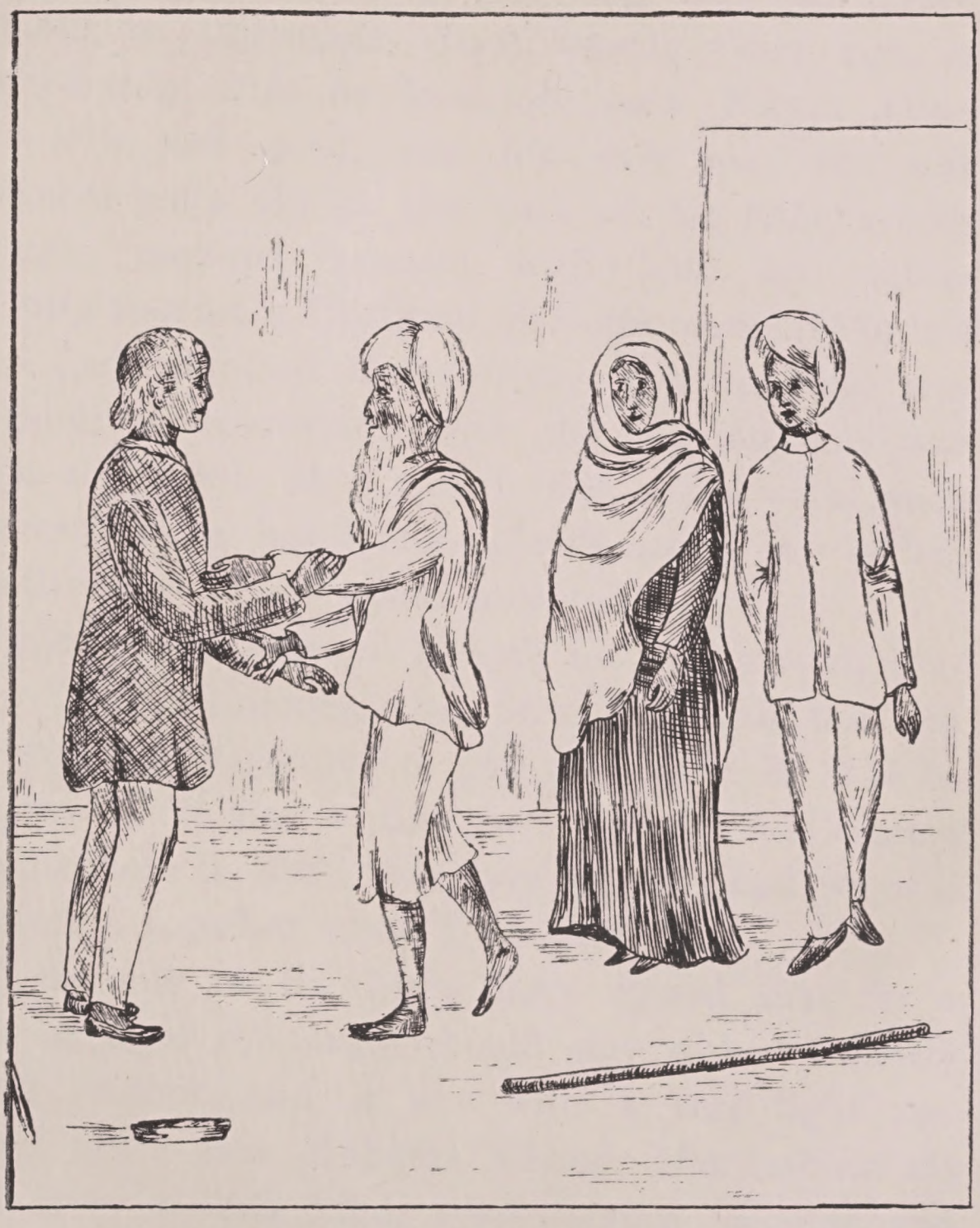
Muhkam Chand turned back and fetched in Narain Dáss, while the woman entered the room and spoke to an old Christian man who sat there, and who, as she described the visitors, rose and came forward to receive them. Muhkam Chand was just leading in his old companion, when the aged occupant of the house came forward to meet them, saying, "Come in and welcome, and stay to eat with us. Do not *only* drink a draught of water, though it is true indeed that our Master has promised a blessing with even a cup of cold water."

As he spoke the *faqír* raised his eyes and gazed intently on the face of the old Christian, while in

his own countenance wonder and pleasure were struggling for the mastery. Almost the same look might be seen on the face of his host, and the next moment the two old men were clasped in each other's arms, and Muhkam Chand heard, with unutterable astonishment, the exclamations "Shiv Jí!" and "Narain Dáss!"

After a few moments the old Christian man said, "But my former name was not fitting for a Christian, and when I received baptism I chose the name of Aaron; so, brother, you must call me now by that."

Deeply interested were the two guests on hearing old Aaron's story, and the time went all too quickly for Muhkam Chand as he listened to the account of how, reading the Gospel in secret, the *faqír's* brother-in-law had been led to inquire further concerning the religion of Jesus, had made himself known to a missionary, and had received regular instruction; had hesitated and waited in doubt and anxiety for many months, not being sure as to the right thing to do; had been struck on the occasion of the *faqír's* visit with the evident unsatisfactoriness of even such a life of attempted sanctity and devotion to the claims of religion; had given him a Hindi Gospel of St. John, and began to pray that God would grant them both light and show them the way of truth; and had felt con-



"Muhkam Chand heard, with unutterable astonishment, the exclamations 'Shiv Jí!' and 'Narain Dáss!'"—*Page* 182.

strained at length to accept the religion of Jesus the Saviour as the only true one, and had joined himself to Christians about twenty years ago, or immediately after he had last seen Narain Dáss. His wife was dead, and his only son, who was thirteen years old at the time of his father's conversion, received baptism with him, and subsequently married a Christian girl—the daughter-in-law who had admitted the visitors. Her husband was working in connection with the Mission, and was gone to preach at a *mela*.[1] She asked with much interest, when her father-in-law's story was ended, whether the guests would now tell theirs.

Narain Dáss excused himself for the present, saying, "Nay, daughter, this dear boy shall tell you all that has happened to him, and then he will be wishing to return to Amritsar. As for me, I must remain here a little with my brother, and we will talk more together when I am rested."

Every one of the little party agreed that for a time at least the *faqír* should stay with his newly found brother, and it was with a very light and happy heart that Muhkam Chand, after telling his own story to his kind, sympathising listeners and sharing a meal with them (of which the *faqír* also partook), made affectionate *saláms* to all three, and set forth on his journey to Amritsar, giving thanks

[1] *Mela* means a fair.

over and over again for this, another wonderful arrangement of God's providence, and feeling quite sure that now at last Narain Dáss would, without further question, become a Christian.

The anxiety with which Philip Muhkam Dín and the mother of David saw him returning so late and without the *faqír* was soon turned into thanksgiving as they heard of the remarkable incident of the morning, and together that little family prayed that the teaching of old Aaron might find in Narain Dáss a prepared heart, and that now, at length, in the evening of his days, he might obey the blessed invitation—

"HO! EVERY ONE THAT THIRSTETH, COME YE TO THE WATERS!"

CHAPTER X.

THE STORY OF AN OLD BIBLE.

It had strengthened the heart of the helpless and weary,
  It had spoken sweet comfort 'mid deepest of gloom;
It had lighted the darkness of suffering so dreary,
  And shined with its glory by death and the tomb.

It had guided the steps of the foolish and fearful,
  Had exhorted the warrior to holier strife;
It had comforted truly the mourner so tearful,
  Revealing the Saviour, the Giver of life!

Now it leads the old pilgrim, as earth's scenes are closing,
  To Jesus, who giveth the burdened ones rest,
And it points the dear child just in death's sleep reposing,
  To the land of the glory, the realms of the blest!

LITTLE David became more ill than his apparently slight symptoms had at first led his mother to fear; and every day, although she kept on hoping that the fever would yield to such common remedies as are customarily used, she had to allow to herself at length that it was no merely ordinary attack, and that the child was not getting better at all; all day and night he was in a burning fever, and he seemed to be growing very weak.

Her brother called a doctor, who spoke gravely of the symptoms, and said that it was a very prostrating

form of fever common in Amritsar at that time of the year, and that the most assiduous care in nursing would be required. This, of course, the good mother was unremitting in attending to; but Philip saw that the constant work and care were too much for her, and he secured for her the services of a Christian widow who lived on the compound of a missionary lady, and who was willingly spared and gladly came to help the good Bibi in her trouble. It was arranged that she should come for the days, returning to take care of her children at night. Her son, a lad of fifteen, attended the Mission School, but was a great favourite with the Government schoolmaster and his sons; his name was Paul, and he could remember the time, five years ago, when, with his mother and little sister, he had been baptized. Very thankfully did David's mother accept the kind help of this neighbour, and the two Bibis became much attached to each other as they watched by the side of the sick child; and one day David's mother asked her kind helper how long she had been a Christian, and begged to hear a little of the story of her life.

Then her friendly little neighbour smiled and said, "You know my name is Basantkor, and my boy's name is Paul. We were baptized five years ago, and as my name had no meaning connected with idols, it was not obliged to be changed; but his name of Paul is a new one, because his old name was Ganesh, and was given

him in honour of that god of the Hindus who, as we foolishly thought, had been the kind donor to me of such a precious gift as a son! Of course, it would be wrong to call a Christian boy *Ganesh*, and so that is why his name is changed.

"Perhaps, Bibi Jí, if you have always been a Christian, you will scarcely be able to understand why his old name of Ganesh still has some pleasant recollections for me, for he was *such* a sweet little boy; and once I nearly lost him when he fell into the water by the Golden Temple and was almost drowned, and after that he was even more precious to me than he was before. My little girl is called *Mercy*, because that is the meaning of *Kirpa*, her old name; but I often call her *Kirpa dei* still, because I know the name has no bad meaning. I knew a very afflicted cripple woman, a widow, whose nephew became a Christian, and the reason that such a poor woman as me was acquainted with them (for they were well-to-do people) was, that when my Ganesh was nearly drowned *her* brother happened to be passing near the Golden Temple, and at once had the child placed in his *gári* and removed to his own house, to be restored and taken care of. Often after that I used to take the child to see the crippled sister of that kind gentleman, and we grew so fond of each other.

"At length I found out that she was believing in the things contained in the Christians' Book, and

that she was almost inclined to become a Christian herself. I was very much afraid, you know, lest any one should think that *I* was having anything to do with the new religion, and so I scarcely liked to listen to what she told me, and yet I enjoyed hearing her talk, and somehow her words seemed to *draw* me, and I felt a longing to hear more. At length, when her nephew became a Christian, she was left very lonely without his help and teaching, for you must understand that they had grown very fond of each other; and once, when he had accidentally discovered that she possessed a Bible, which she had purchased from some Christian woman who sold them in the *gallis* and *zenanas*, he took it away to read it himself, and after that they felt drawn towards each other more than ever, because they knew each other's secret. When he went away and became a Christian, of course, according to the Hindu religion, his young wife was made a widow, and so she and her husband's aunt were very much thrown together, and grew fond of each other. Of course, the whole family were very angry, and the son was turned out and never allowed to visit his parents to this day; and Wírán̲, his afflicted aunt, was very severely treated also, because they feared she was intending to join the Christians, while the poor little Shánti shared in her disgrace and punishment.

"This lasted a long time. I was a Hindu woman then, and did not know why these people gave themselves so much trouble and got into so much disgrace just in order to change their religion; but still I never forgot the beautiful things which Wírán had read to me and told me out of her Book, and somehow I felt happier when I was thinking them over.

"Once I was so fortunate as to get the chance to see Wírán again in her brother's house, which was a great pleasure, because I had been so long excluded from her, as she had not been allowed to have any visitors. But the pleasure was rather spoilt by my being so dreadfully shocked when I saw the condition of Wírán and Shánti, and it made me quite angry with the people of my own religion to think that those who had done no harm to any one should be thus ill-treated. Wírán's nephew (Shánti's husband, you know,) is called Partáp Singh, and he has become the pastor of a village church a great many miles from here. His young wife decided to become a Christian in consequence of Wírán's teaching, and after a great deal of trouble Partáp Singh succeeded in removing them both to his own house by an order of the Court, given on the ground that both were of age and wished to join him as Christians. Shortly after their baptism the aunt, Wírán, died; and now, of course,

Shánti is gone with her husband to that village I spoke of.

"My husband was living then, and he and my mother-in-law were not pleased because I was so fond of Wirán, and I was in her room when she died. But as for me, I could never forget her or learn to dislike the beautiful things she said and taught me, and I begged of Shánti to give me lessons in reading. Shánti was not able to do this, because she was young and very inexperienced, but she asked a missionary lady, who kindly sometimes came herself and sometimes sent a Christian Bibi to my house regularly; and as my teachers were very patient with me, I soon learnt to read. Shánti had already promised that when I could read she would give me Wirán's old Bible; and great was my joy when, one day, I went to the Bábu Partáp Singh's house and showed how I could read aloud, and he and his wife agreed that now it was time for me to have the Bible. I took it home and kept it hidden, and sometimes read quietly to myself. I was daily getting more and more interested in it and drawn towards all that it taught, when my husband died after a very short attack of fever. I turned to my Book then for help, and grew very fond of some of its comforting words.

"My mother-in-law was very particular about having every ceremony properly gone through in

"I began to love the Saviour who, for me, a poor, ignorant heathen woman, *had done everything.*"—*Page* 191.

connection with her son's death, and she often urged me to *do púja at Tanks;*[1] but I cared nothing for this—I felt it was no good. My heart was heavy, for I had lost a good and kind husband, and now I had no one to care for my children. After much thinking I decided to believe in the God of the Christians. At first, perhaps, this was chiefly because I felt so miserable and knew of no way in which I could earn a living; but as I heard more and more from those Christians to whom I applied for advice, and especially as Shánti and her husband taught me more of the beautiful promises of the Gospel, I began to love the Saviour who, for me, a poor, ignorant heathen woman, *had done everything.* My mother-in-law was exceedingly angry at my decision, and tried to persuade some of my husband's male relatives to claim my children and take them from me by force. However, the kind missionaries and other Christian friends helped me over that difficulty and placed me under instruction and protection at a missionary lady's house, and after a time I and my children were baptized. Then I was regularly employed as a helper in a Mission school in the city. Of course, I cannot teach much, only some kinds of needlework and reading Hindi; but I

[1] By floating upon the water as many little *chirâgs* as represented the number of years of her husband's life, and then praying to the god of the water.

am learning too, and so I hope that some day I shall be able to do much better than I can now.

"My mother-in-law has again become friendly, and she even comes to stay with me sometimes; but, of course, she is very particular about keeping her own drinking-vessels and things to herself, and she always cooks her own bread; but I can see she is much softened, and she does not say nearly so many unkind things as she once did; and then, you know, she is so exceedingly fond of the children, and especially of Paul (whom she persists in still calling *Ganesh*), that perhaps in the end her heart may be drawn quite to our religion. I *have* once or twice persuaded her to listen to a little reading from my precious Book."

It was only a day or two after this unusually long talk that little David's nurses thought he still seemed to be getting weaker, and the fever was not at all subdued. Every now and then, for a few hours, he seemed so exceedingly ill that his mother thought, "Can he be going to die!" She told her worst fears to her brother, who, although awake now himself to the child's danger, tried to reassure and console her. However, he said it would be well, and doubtless a comfort to her, if he sent for Mohindránáth without delay. Philip came to sit down by his little nephew, and asked, Would he like to see dear father? The child quickly replied, "Oh yes! I want father, and

Narain Dáss too, please, *my* old *faqír!*" Muhkam Chand undertook to go and fetch the *faqír*, while a messenger was despatched to Akbarpur to take the news to Mohindránáth that his child was very ill.

No one thought, except the mother and uncle, that the illness might probably end fatally; many neighbours and friends came in to show sympathy, but all tried to cheer the good Bibi and encourage her to think that there would soon be a favourable change, of which she might take advantage to have him removed to Akbarpur.

The child himself was quiet and happy, though very prostrate with the fever; he liked to lie still and listen to the sound of his mother's footsteps or voice or movements as she went about her few duties, and he had been from the first pleased to have Basantkor by him, and when feeling at times a little stronger, would ask her about her children and herself, until by degrees he had heard all her readily told tale.

"I like that Bible," he said quietly; "it is a dear old Bible. Your boy, Paul, will love it, and he will be able to read it. Ah! he is clever. And then he can *see*, while I can only know what I can *remember;* and there must be great heaps in the Bible which a little boy like me could never remember. It must be very nice to be able to read!"

Paul would come sometimes and tell him a Bible story

or read a few verses from the Hymn-book; but though he liked his young visitor and called him his brother, yet he would soon weary of talking or reading; they made his head ache, unless he was resting in his mother's arms, or holding the hand of Muhkam Chand as he sat on the little bed by his side. Then he would ask them to read or sing or talk; *they* never tired him; they only soothed and rested him so much. During the few hours before Muhkam Chand could return with the *faqír* the child lay very quiet, and always seemed to be *listening*, and very heavy grew his mother's heart as she watched his increasing weakness and wondered whether he thought himself that he would soon, perhaps, leave his mother and go to the Saviour! She was schooling her heart to meet whatever might be in store for her, when she heard him say, half to himself, "He will be our Shepherd, after as before; by still heavenly waters feed us evermore;" and then she felt sure that he *was* looking forward to a very different ending of this illness from any which they had all thought of at first. She told her brother Philip, and he said, "We are doing all we can. God will order everything for the best, and we must give Him thanks that this sweet child has found it true in Jesu's love—

"'He shall feed me in a green pasture, and lead me forth beside the waters of comfort.'"

CHAPTER XI.

"THAT LIFE-GIVING STREAM!"

A new bright day
Is dawning on the old man's life, a day
So radiantly full of joy, so free
From burden, grief, and weary, hopeless search;
A day of such heart-rest, such calm and peace,
That he shall backward look and oft recall
His old, worn, weary, wandering self as once
Upon life's dusty highway on he toiled,
Footsore, athirst, unsatisfied. And now!
He questions often can he be *the same?*
Yes, 'tis the same, and at the first sweet draught
Of that pure well-spring of immortal life,
To which, in love unerring, God had led
The weary traveller's steps, new life began
To flow in warm, full, joyous, blessed tide,
And after all his dark and wretched night
Of doubt and want, his upward look of praise
Reveals for him a glorious, heavenly dawn,
A new, bright day!

THE *faqír* was exceedingly distressed by the news of the illness of the little child, and he seemed quite unable to speak about himself, as again and again he begged Muhkam Chand to tell him would he live? was he conscious? had every possible *hakím* and every likely medicine been already tried? was his father coming?

Muhkam Chand, although quite as anxious as the *faqír* about the dear child so beloved by all of them, was yet more concerned to know what had been the effect upon Narain Dáss of this sojourn with his brother-in-law.

Narain Dáss was so eager to start for Amritsar that it was with difficulty that Muhkam Chand could secure even a few minutes' talk with Aaron to ask him what he was so longing to know. But they did find time to tell him, "Oh! he has believed the good news at last, and we are all coming into Amritsar to be present at his baptism. He says he is too old to wait any longer, and indeed he is very feeble; we scarcely thought one or two days when he lay down to rest that he would be able to get up again. As to his old belief, he was nearly broken down in that when he came, and all he knew of your case helped him very much to see the evils of Hinduism, and how a poor sinner could never get help or life out of such a religion as that; and so he came here already more than half a Christian, and finding me, his old brother, as it were, seemed like God taking him by the hand and leading him right on. He was so surprised, and he wondered so much at the power and wisdom of God, and then from that it was not very difficult to bring him to wonder at His *love* too; and, you know, when once

a man comes to think rightly of *that*, why, he is almost a Christian!"

Old Narain Dáss was getting impatient to be on the way, so they set out; and presently, while waiting for an *ekha*, he said, "My son, I have come to *your* Saviour; I have found the 'Well-Spring of Immortality.'"

Muhkam Chand's heart was very full of joy, and he silently thanked God as he listened to all the old man had to tell him of the time spent with Aaron, and the gradual breaking in of the light, the gradual but sure hope which had dawned in his heart during these few days.

"I had long felt," he said, "that there was truth in what the Christians taught, but I never could quite come to believe that it was *the* Truth. I tried to hold on to my notion that Christianity is all very well for those who are born to *it*, and Hinduism for those who are born to *it*, but that changing about was no good for any man; and besides, you see, I felt so sure that these sacred rivers and tanks in different places throughout India *must* have some efficacy since so many people had such faith in them, and I could not believe that this was all a lie and a mistake, nor could I be satisfied till I had tried all round; and now I *have* tried, and I know it *is* all a lie, for the more I have tried, and the more I have done, and the

more suffering I have borne, the more have I felt *no satisfaction.* There was nothing in all these things which met the innermost wants of a man's being and made him feel at rest. When I first read of the Saviour I admired Him, but thought His life a very marvellously conjured-up tale, beautifully written and made very attractive, but still the life of a merely human being—not a true one, because all experience says that none could be so absolutely perfect, so spotlessly holy, but *a grand imagination.* It was when Aaron put before me the thought that this wonderful Man was, and is, God Almighty, and showed me proof in His *words* and *deeds,* fulfilling exactly, as they do, the prophecies of the Divine Saviour — prophecies written hundreds of years before His life on earth — that I felt unable to answer his arguments; and when he asked me to prove this Divine Man by speaking to Him as to God, and asking Him to supply what everything I had tried on earth had failed to give, I resolved to try at once so simple a test. This is only three days ago, but from trustfully asking Jesus Christ, if indeed He were the Saviour of men, to take away my desolateness and give me satisfaction after all my fruitless efforts to find it elsewhere, I have had every hour an increasing sense of rest. It seems as if my poor old heart had become warmed, and I could almost think that new

young blood was running in my veins. I no longer grieve that I am lost, outside, unhappy, and empty. I am glad now, and satisfied."

Much more would the old man have told to his happy young listener, but the *ekha* being now ready to start, they took their seats, and it was not longer possible to carry on conversation, and with the exception of a few occasional remarks, they proceeded in silence on their road to Amritsar; but Muhkam Chand was lifting up his heart in praise that his poor old friend had drunk of that "life-giving stream."

When they reached Amritsar they found a slight change for the better in the little patient, who was eagerly looking forward to hearing about the *faqír*. While somewhat relieved from her sore anxiety about him, his mother was prepared to listen, as every one else was, to the old man's story. With what thankful hearts did Philip and Muhkam Chand rejoice over the long misled and weary wanderer now come to Christ to find rest and to have his thirst for ever quenched at last by that "living water"!

But on the face of the sick child there was a look of wondrous joy. "Is my old *faqír* going to be a Christian?" he cried. "Oh! when will he be baptized? Shall I be well enough to go to church and hear?"

Philip Muhkam Dín subsequently learnt that arrangements for the baptism on the following Sunday

had already been made, the missionaries having seen the old man two days ago at the village where Aaron lived, and having received from him most satisfactory evidence as to the *faqír's* readiness, after his long and earnest searching and final complete yielding of himself to God. Every one who knew anything about the whole case felt that no delay was admissible, for the time evidently drew near when this old toil-worn traveller must go to his "long home." When David heard that the baptism would be on Sunday he was very glad, though for a moment the tears stood in his sightless eyes as he whispered, "Then, brother, I shall not be able to go; I am sorry for that;" but brightening at once, he continued—"But it is better than his waiting. You see, he might die."

The next evening Mohindránáth arrived. He had been obliged to wait until he received official permission to leave his post; but now he was able to tell them all that he had obtained ten days' leave, and hoped that, perhaps, by the time it was expired he might find it possible to take little David and his mother home again. But when he had for a while sat and watched his child he felt very heavy-hearted, for something seemed to tell him that he would never take him home again. Those who had been so constantly with him, even including the fond mother and the anxious little neighbour, Basantkor,

had been deceived by familiarity with the sight of the little suffering face, and had buoyed themselves up with hope until they were quite prepared to exaggerate every symptom for the better, and they were almost surprised when, after his first watch by the side of his child, Mohindránáth came out into the verandah and sat down by his brotherly friend, and then, burying his face in his hands, exclaimed, "Oh! why did you not prepare me for the worst?" But he too felt hope revive as he noticed the child's quiet happiness. He began to think he had been too much startled; that perhaps, after all, there was not really so much change for the worse as he had feared; and so after a few hours he was prepared to join a little in conversation, and to listen with as much interest as he ever took in such matters to the story of the *faqír* having found his brother-in-law and having been led to embrace Christianity. He was even pleased, on the whole, that there was to be a baptism on Sunday. It was, as he remarked to Philip, "a perfectly safe case, in which there could be no question of minority;" and he also felt that it was in favour of the man being baptized that there were no Hindu friends to come troubling, and there was old Aaron to give him such things as he had need of, so that he was not likely to "come on the Mission."

"Just see, now," he added, "the trouble this boy

has given all through choosing most unnecessarily to leave his old religion."

Muhkam Chand was not present, and Philip only quietly answered, "I do not think that *that* is the way the angels look at it; for, you know, 'there is joy in the presence of the angels of God over one sinner that repenteth.'"

"Oh, I don't know much about the angels," was the answer; "but, you see, we must always *be careful*."

Basantkor and young Paul were among those who were very glad about the old *faqír*, for Muhkam Chand had told them all about his life, and had related all his wonderful kindness to himself, and how he had delivered him from such terrible danger and proved such a faithful friend.

When Basantkor heard that Narain Dáss could read Hindi, she brought her Bible and told him a little about its history, and asked him if he would like to have it by him as long as he was staying in the house; and he listened with many exclamations of sorrow to the story of Wírán̲'s sufferings, and with many expressions of happiness to the description of her faith and baptism and happy death.

"Ah!" he said, "that was another poor weak one led, like me, by a weary and difficult way, to come all right at last."

He kept the Bible constantly near him during the two days that intervened before Sunday, and he often

might be seen sitting somewhere in the room where the sick child was; for little David loved to have him there, and would ask him to read something to him which he had found new in that book. Mohindránáth rather discouraged this, but David's mother used her quiet influence to ensure it, and always managed to let Narain Dáss see that she would like him to stay, for she knew that the child so loved the company of both Narain Dáss and Muhkam Chand that it was far better for him in every way to have them near him. And thus it happened that several times during those two days when Mohindránáth was sitting by the side of his child that old Bible was doing a triple work: it was comforting the heart of a little pilgrim who, in spite of all his fondly loving parents' too sanguine hopes, was going surely down into the valley of the shadow of death; it was throwing fresh light upon the path of the old traveller in the eventide of his days, and teaching him new lessons of truth and grace; and it was knocking at the heart of a nominal Christian who had never yet made room for Jesus to enter into that heart in all the fulness and freeness of His love and grace. Ah! Mohindránáth would have escaped even then from the knocking if it had not been for his unwillingness to leave the child round whose waning life all his heart's best affections were entwined.

On Saturday evening old Aaron arrived, and the

schoolmaster's house was full indeed of guests. It is a custom among the Christians of India to be very hospitable one to another, and never to refuse to receive any visitor unless absolutely obliged. Their houses have wonderful capacities for accommodating many guests, and the difficulty often felt in England about "giving a friend a bed" is in India almost *nil.* *Chárpaies* are cheap and very movable, easily placed in verandahs (in a row, if need be) or on roofs in suitable weather, and they are made ready at once for occupation as soon as the visitor's *gathrís* (or bundles) are opened and their *razais*, pillows, and blankets spread.[1]

It was a strange company gathered together for that Sunday, and strangely mingled feelings were present in every heart. At the time of the afternoon service, when the baptism was to take place, only the father and mother of little David remained at home; they were anxiously watching the effect of a new medicine which had been given on Saturday night by a fresh doctor, whom Mohindránáth had called in. The good Bibi longed to go, but felt she could not tear herself away from the child or lose one of those precious hours of his little life, which she felt increasingly sure were numbered now. As for Mohindránáth, he had resolved

[1] With some modification (on account of *our conventional requirements!*) this description applies to Europeans' arrangements for visitors, whom in India it is exceedingly easy to entertain.

to hope, and he frequently urged his child to say did he feel better now? was the fever less? was the medicine doing him any good?

The little fellow would smile and look as though he would cheer his father's heart if he could; but his thoughts were not there, nor was he caring about the medicine or fretting about the fever, which kept on so persistently, without intermission. When at length he heard the clock strike five he exclaimed, "There! it must be done now; my old *faqír* is a Christian!"

When the whole party returned from church they ate together with their new brother, and then, before parting for the night, had another little service of prayer and praise.

Aaron asked Narain Dáss whether he would accompany him home on the morrow. But Narain Dáss begged to be left for a while, and asked his brother to return home without him, promising that, as soon as he saw how the child would be, he would come to the village and visit him.

The question was raised as to how the *faqír* should live and where he should stay, and, of course, Aaron was eager in his entreaties that his brother-in-law should consider his house always his home and share his humble fare.

But Narain Dáss had hoped still to beg his bread, and to end his life as he had carried it on for so

many years homeless and alone. He had, with some regret, agreed to presenting himself for baptism in some white clothes which David's mother had provided for him, and which every one assured him were the only suitable ones for the occasion, and afterwards he had persuaded his friends to allow him to resume his yellow clothing, to which he had been so long accustomed; and he had asked Muhkam Chand to carve for him a rough wooden cross to put on as a head to his staff, in order that he might not be mistaken for a Hindu, but might be everywhere recognised as a Christian *faqír*. Not altogether satisfied that he should, in his weak state, be again often alone and begging his bread, and yet persuaded that no other condition would exactly suit his life-long habits, his kind friends and advisers had to comfort themselves with his promise to be very frequently at the house of his brother Aaron, and to rest there as much as he could. At length they parted for the night, some to sleep and others to watch, and each one whose heart God had touched and filled with His own love gave Him special thanks for the fulfilment in the *faqír's* case of the word of promise of Him who is "the Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the end"—

"I WILL GIVE UNTO HIM THAT IS ATHIRST OF THE FOUNTAIN OF THE WATER OF LIFE FREELY."

CHAPTER XII.

SEEING AND SATISFIED.

Opening his eyes upon that Land of glory,
Sees the sweet child at length the Saviour's face;
Knows *this* to be the Friend whose wondrous story
From Bethlehem to Calvary he loved to trace—
Sees and is satisfied!

Calm is the rest and glorious is the gladness
Dwelling within the aged pilgrim's heart,
As, after all earth's wanderings and sadness,
He sees Thee, blessed Saviour, as Thou art—
Sees and is satisfied!

AARON left in the morning for his village home, but Narain Dáss stayed on all that day and the next, sharing with the sorrowing family the anxious watch by the sick child. Philip Muhkam Dín was obliged to be present at school, and the boys accompanied him, so that during the day David's mother was very glad of the help of the old man, who could undertake short journeys on errands for her, and who was never so pleased as when he could be doing something to show his gratitude and love.

The doctor came two or three times on Monday, and brought another on Tuesday with whom to consult about the case, but no medicine made any

difference to that relentless low fever which was so surely sapping the child's life.

In the evening Muhkam Chand could not study; he felt that he could not be away from the little sufferer who clung to him as if they had been indeed brothers.

Paul, too, and the other boys would come and speak to him, and he liked them to come well enough; but it was Muhkam Chand he longed for, and nothing would satisfy him, when he knew school-hours were over, until the boy was sharing the watch with father and mother. The doctor took the father aside that evening at last, and spoke the terrible words *no hope;* he felt obliged to warn him that the strength of the always delicate child had already held out wonderfully, but they must not dare hope that it would bear a much longer strain, and in all probability the end must be expected within a few hours.

Mohindránáth, thus obliged to relinquish his last hope, became terribly distressed; he called another doctor and yet another, but none gave him any encouragement. He wanted next to try some powerful medicine which he had heard of, but Philip knew that it was only giving the child useless trouble, and he earnestly dissuaded Mohindránáth from trying to administer it—"For, alas! my brother," he urged, "it is too sadly evident that our dear child is dying now."

"And now, from that happy land where I shall be able to see, I shall always be waiting for dear father."—*Page* 209.

The little boy caught the whispered word. "Am I dying?" he asked. "Muhkam Chand, am I dying? Mother, what is this? Is it the valley of the shadow of death?" And then, after a quiet pause, "Where is my *faqír?* Come here, Bábá. I have never seen you; I have only thought of what you may be like. Let me feel once more your face, that I may know you again when we meet in the land where I shall be able to see."

For a moment the rugged, care-worn face of the old man, who had so late entered into the light and love of God, was almost touching the child's in strange and beautiful contrast, as the fevered hands, so thin and weak, so hurried and eager, passed over the features of the *faqír;* and then the child said, "Now, Bábá, I shall not forget; I shall know you again when you come to heaven."

He was very exhausted with this effort, but after a moment's rest he was trying to speak again, and as his mother leaned over him she caught the words, "Where is father?" In a moment Mohindránáth was beside him, and the child said, "Father, I always used to watch for you to come from school; and now, from that happy land where I shall be able to see, I shall always be waiting for dear father."

Ah! Mohindránáth, it was the rod of a loving, gracious God which smote thee then, and which had been smiting thee many times before as thou didst

silently watch all that went on by thy sick child's bed, and realised that he and his old *faqír* friend and young lately converted boy companion were all farther advanced in the heavenly road than thee. Well mightest thou forget all else at that moment, and on thy knees, by the side of thy dying child, grasping the tiny hand that had led thee to Jesus, cry, "I will arise and go to my Father, and will say unto Him, 'Father, I have sinned.'"

David's mother, from the depths of her own unfathomable sorrow, lifted up her comforted heart with one glad cry of gratitude as she realised that the dying child was leading the father, so long indifferent and careless, to the "Well-Spring of Immortality." Muhkam Chand's eyes met those of the weeping mother, and each felt that in the meaning look of praise on the other's face they had read the fact that to each the other's hidden grief on behalf of the schoolmaster had been an open secret.

And thus, joined by other neighbours and the sisters of the little sufferer, who were present from the school with their kind friend, the missionary lady, who was at the head of it, they watched; and one parent held each little hand in silent agony as the blind child who had unconsciously led others to light and joy was drawing nearer and nearer to the land where "they need no candle, neither the light of the sun; for the Lord God giveth them light."

His laboured breath and failing consciousness told all too plainly moment by moment that the watchers' sad task would soon be done. Once again his lips moved, and he named his dear brother, Muhkam Chand, and then "my old *faqír;*" and after a moment, with a last effort and a bright look upwards, "I see! I see!" and while some among the almost breathless watchers whispered, "He is gone," Muhkam Chand said in a clear, quiet voice, "'They shall see His Face; and His Name shall be in their foreheads.'"

. . . . . .

The following day, when the body of their beloved child had been laid in the cemetery, and many kind friends had called to mourn with the sorrowing father and mother, Narain Dáss said that he would go to stay for a little while with Aaron; and Muhkam Chand, knowing how great a trial to the old man's weak frame had been the excitement, both joyous and sorrowful, of the last few days, resolved to take him on an *ekha*, and only leave him when he had committed him safely to the care of Aaron and his daughter-in-law.

Mohindránáth had still a portion of his granted leave, and at Philip's earnest request spent it with him.

Little David's mother was bearing up well, the

neighbours said, under her heavy sorrow; but, ah! they could not see the aching void in the heart of the brave woman, who, although exceedingly comforted because, out of the depth of this desolation and grief, her husband had turned with all his heart to God, yet realised more and more every moment the sad loss of the sweet child whose presence in the house had been one of its brightest joys.

Philip lost no opportunity of seeking to deepen the impressions made at the deathbed of the child, and night after night he led his friend to prayerful study of God's Word, teaching and helping him for whom he had so long prayed, and over whom now at length he had cause for rejoicing.

When Muhkam Chand came back from his journey with the old *faqír*, Mohindránáth sought his company, that he might hear from his own lips what he had never cared to know before, but what he now felt the keenest interest in understanding—how he came to be a Christian. When Muhkam Chand had told his old schoolmaster as much as he could of his reading and thought and final decision, he asked him eagerly of his family, and begged that from time to time he would send him some news of them. "And could you not," he somewhat timidly added, "go to them on the strength of your old friendship, and tell them of the Saviour?"

"Alas!" said the now penitent and deeply humbled man, "I feel ashamed. How dare I lift up my face before those in whose presence I have hitherto been so cowardly?"

"But you were cowardly because you did not really know the Saviour's love," urged Muhkam Chand; "now *that* has come into your heart, it will make you strong, and you will be no more afraid."

Basantkor heard with great joy from little David's mother that the words of the dying child had been so blessed to the father, and the two good Bibis drew very near together in this time of strangely mingled sorrow and joy.

But the bereaved parents had to return to their desolate home in Akbarpur, and Basantkor went home also to the shelter of the Mission, Miss Sahiba's Zenana compound, and for a few weeks all things in the house of Philip Muhkam Dín went on in their usual course.

Two or three times Muhkam Chand took advantage of a holiday to go over to the village and inquire for Narain Dáss, and each time spent some pleasant hours in intercourse with the affectionate old man, whose failing strength still deterred him from carrying out his intention of resuming his wandering life. It was near Christmas when he returned from one of these expeditions, very happy and with some good news to tell. Aaron had told him that on the coming

Christmas festival, when the Christians of the village (being too few to have a church of their own) should go into Amritsar, Narain Dáss was to be admitted with them to the Holy Communion. One of the missionaries had been over several times to teach and prepare him for this happy occasion, and Aaron was very thankful, and told Muhkam Chand that this would be the most joyous Christmas of his life.

When the festive season came and many visitors arrived, the *faqír* and his brother came to stay with Philip Muhkam Dín. The *faqír* and his "dear son," Muhkam Chand, had a good deal of happy talk together, the younger longing to tell the old man as much as he possibly could about the meaning of Christmas and all its joys. Before they parted for the night he said, with a conscious, shy look, "I want to tell you, Bábá, that I am soon going to be some one else's 'dear son' now." Then, seeing that his poor old listener was puzzled, he added, "Bábu Mohindránáth and the mother of little David love me for that dear child's sake, and you know he always liked to call me brother; and I am to be a son in their family, and call them mother and father, and try to make them happy in their great sorrow and in the loneliness of their home; and I am very glad to feel that they love me so and can make me their son."

"But how is it to be?" questioned the old man. "I cannot understand."

"Oh! why not, Bábá? Don't you see they are going to give me their elder daughter to be my wife!"

. . . . . .

We cannot follow the story of that young couple, but we may imagine the home enlightened by the beautiful light of God's love, and cheered by His constant and earnestly sought, because truly loved, Presence. We may venture to think of one there who, after long steeling his heart against that light and love, now walks humbly with his God, led by the gentle hand of a prayerful wife, leaning on the strong, manly son whose faith has stood such fiery trials, and rejoicing in the affection of daughters who are rising up to call their mother blessed. But amid all their love and care, and in all that he humbly learns from each one, he seems to feel himself the soft pressure of little, feeble, fevered fingers clasping his, and to be ever drawn nearer and nearer to the heavenly world by little David; while over and over again, as he mourns at the Saviour's feet, with many tears, his old stupidity and blindness, he feels that he can echo for himself by faith the last words he heard uttered by those childish lips—"*I see! I see!*"

And we should not be far wrong if we were to look forward a few years and find another son-in-law in that happy household, and hear him called *Paul*, when he comes sometimes with his wife and children; and we should recognise his mother in middle life as our

old friend Basantkor; and we should see, perhaps, on high days and holidays, a very merry, happy family party, the childish members of which always like to hear, over and over again, Muhkam Chand's and Basantkor's wonderful stories of themselves and others; but around none of these earnestly called for recitals does such a loving interest centre as around the history of little David!

. . . . . .

We must draw the *pardah* on these tempting scenes, and recall ourselves to the Christmas Day on which old Narain Dáss was led by his strong young friend to the service in church. He was very feeble, and his steps tottered so much that Muhkam Chand wondered whether he would ever go to church again.

The poor, weary face was lighted up with pleasure as he listened to the strains of

"Hark! the Herald Angels sing,
Glory to the new-born King!"

and again his aged head was reverently bowed at the refrain of another hymn—

"O come, let us adore Him!"

When all was over he seemed unwilling to accompany his friends to their home, but said he would stay there a while and continue to think of the great love they had been commemorating. They all agreed, however, that his weakness was too great for it to be

wise to leave him to find his way alone, and very gently Aaron and Muhkam Chand persuaded him, and led him away between them.

He spoke very little, but once or twice his companions heard him speak of the water of life; and when Muhkam Chand asked him, "Bábá, you know *now* where to find the 'Well-Spring of Immortality'? he answered with an eager though trembling voice, "Ah! my son, it is *Jesus Himself.*"

After dinner they persuaded him to rest on his *chárpaie* for a while, and meantime they sat talking and singing, receiving Christmas calls from neighbours, and quite forgetting how late it was. Nearly two hours had passed away when they went to call him, but he was gone. On the *chárpaie* lay the white clothes in which they had arrayed him for church, and the yellow *faqír*-cloth had evidently been put on, for it was nowhere to be found.

They made many inquiries among the neighbours, but no one had seen him go. Aaron felt sure he must have started for the village, as he had said that unless they returned that day there would be no returning for *him;* so some time was spent in searching along that road and in inquiries from the *ekhawalas* who were waiting for passengers outside the various city gates. Suddenly, as people questioned what the boys were searching for, and many came forward with suggestions or offering to give news, one

man, who had just walked in from another village, said, "Stay! A sort of *Christian faqír*, is he? Has he a book in his hand and a staff with the Christians' *nishán* upon it—the Cross?"

"Yes, yes!" eagerly cried Muhkam Chand. "Where did you meet him?"

"On the road near the Christians' cemetery more than an hour ago. I saw him drinking water from the spring near there," said the man.

"Why, of course," thought Muhkam Chand. "How foolish of me not to think! *That*, then, was what he wanted to do after church. Oh that I had thought of this before!"

So saying, he hurried with his companions to the cemetery. At first they chatted; but somehow as they went on they all grew quieter, and hardly a word was spoken as at last they stood by the gate.

Muhkam Chand felt almost afraid to ask the *chaukidár* if he had seen Narain Dáss.

"Yes," said the man; "I saw him a good while ago. I had forgotten he was here. He is somewhere wandering about looking at the graves. You'll find him if you go in."

Muhkam Chand led the way straight to the one spot where he now felt quite sure he would find his old friend, and, sure enough, there was his aged form prostrate upon the small mound which marked the resting-place of little David.

"He would 'hunger no more, neither thirst any more.' The silver cord was loosed; the golden bowl was broken!"—*Page* 219.

The boys drew near, and one of them said, "He is saying his prayers."

"Hush!" said Muhkam Chand, as he went gently forward and touched lightly the yellow dress. He softly said his name. No answer. Then, kneeling by his side on the grass and trying to raise the prostrate form, he found it was true what he had already begun to suspect. The old man's pilgrimage was done. For him there was no more any weariness or disappointment or sorrow. He would "hunger no more, neither thirst any more." The silver cord was loosed; the golden bowl was broken!

By his side lay the book which had been given him, with a prayer for God's blessing, more than twenty years ago by his brother-in-law, the book which had really first taught him of the true Well-Spring of Immortality; and there lay the old *faqír*-staff surmounted by the Christians' *nishán*, by which he had tried to tell others Whose he was and Whom he was learning to serve; and there lay the shell from which he had drank his last draught of earthly water. But neither book nor staff nor cocoanut-shell would ever be needed again; he would never more need a guide for his feet, nor a support for his weary limbs, nor a draught of water to quench his thirst—*for he was satisfied!*

. . . . . .

His body was tenderly lifted by strong young arms, and laid in the house of the Christian *chaukidár* of

the cemetery, whence the next day a band of Christians, leading with much kindly sympathy old Aaron, bore it to its last resting-place close to the grave of the little child, and laid it there in sure and certain hope of the resurrection to eternal life.

With a heart very full of mingled joy and sorrow, Muhkam Chand, as he turned away from that sacred spot, gave thanks for two whom he had learnt to love so well, of whom he could now feel that they were *seeing* and *satisfied!*

"OUR CITIZENSHIP IS IN HEAVEN, FROM WHENCE ALSO WE WAIT FOR A SAVIOUR, THE LORD JESUS CHRIST, WHO SHALL FASHION ANEW THIS BODY OF OUR HUMILIATION, THAT IT MAY BE CONFORMED TO THE BODY OF HIS GLORY, ACCORDING TO THE WORKING WHEREBY HE IS ABLE EVEN TO SUBJECT ALL THINGS UNTO HIMSELF."

GLOSSARY.

Allah. Name generally used for God by Mohammedans.
Bábá. Polite way of addressing an old man.
Bahu. Daughter-in-law.
Bak-hshísh. Gift.
Basantkor. A woman's name. (Hindu.)
Bázár. Street in which there are shops.
Behári Lál. A man's name. (Hindu.)
Cháddar. Veil worn by women.
Chakkarbatti. A man's name. (Bengali, Hindu.)
Chandarmáli. A charm against the influence of the moon.
Chárpáie. A bedstead, literally a four-legged thing.
Chaukidári. The occupation of a watchman; from *chauki*, a chair, and *dár*, a mansion.
Chaunk. A square, generally a part where four *bázárs* meet.
Chenáb. The name of a sacred river in the Panjáb.
Chirág. A little earthenware lamp.
Chuhrás. People of the sweeper caste.
Chupátti. The unleavened bread commonly eaten by natives of India.
Chuprássi. A messenger; from the name *chuprás*, which is the badge of service worn by messengers.
Dáie. A name used for a midwife and for a foster-mother.
Dharmsála. A place in the Lower Himalayas, considered sacred, and much resorted to by pilgrims.
Doolie. A sort of sedan-chair. See illustration, p. 63.
Ekhá. A native conveyance on two wheels.
Ekha wala. The proprietor and driver of an *ekha*.
Faqír. A beggar.

Fath Kẖán. A man's name. (Mohammedan.)
Galli. A narrow lane in a city.
Ganesh. Name of the elephant-headed idol.
Gári. A carriage.
Gathri. A bundle of bedding or rugs.
Ghát. A place by a river for burning or bathing.
Ghí. Clarified butter.
Granth. The sacred book of the Sikhs.
Hae! hae! Expression of grief.
Hamumam. Name of the monkey-god.
Indrá. Name of a god.
Janam patri. Horoscope written out for Hindu boys.
Janu. Sacred thread worn by Brahmans.
Jawálamukhi. A sacred place in the Lower Himaláyas.
Jí. Respectful way of addressing any one. It answers to "sir.'
Kachery. Court and offices for Government work.
Kálí. Name of a goddess.
Kapra-wala. Cloth merchant.
Karáni. Contemptuous name for Christians.
Kirpa dei. A woman's name. (Hindu.)
Kurtá. A part of the dress, answering to jacket.
Lotá. Drinking-vessel.
Má Gangá. "Mother Ganges."
Mantrá. A short prayer, like a collect.
Masjid. Worshipping-place of Mohammedans.
Mela. Fair or any large gathering.
Mohindránáth. A man's name. (Bengali, Hindu.)
Narain Dáss. A man's name. (Hindu.)
Ním. Name of a tree.
Nishán. Sign.
Pacca. Ripe; used of anything which is good, solid, strong. *Pacca* plaster, *i.e.*, strong-finished, well-made plaster.
Panchávat. A gathering in a family or caste to settle any question. Five being a quorum, the name *panchávat* is used, as *panch* means five.
Pandit. Learned man. (Hindu.)
Pardah nishín. A lady kept in *pardah* or behind the curtain.

Pankah. A fan.
Pice. Small copper coin.
Piláo. Cooked rice with meat or sweets added.
Pípal. A large spreading tree—sacred.
Prem Chand. A man's name. (Hindu.)
Púja. Worship. (Hindu.)
Rájah. A ruler.
Ramazán. The long fast of the Mohammedans.
Rattan Chand. A man's name. (Hindu.)
Razáie. A sort of eider-down quilt, made with cotton instead of down.
Salám. Salutation—meaning peace.
Saníchar máli. A charm against any evil influence of Saturday.
Sir-i-Rám. A devout ejaculation addressed to the god *Rám.*
Shiv. The god of death.
Sudras. Very low-caste Hindus.
Suraj máli. A charm against any evil influence of the sun.
Tae Khána. A cool cellar underground used for sitting in during the hot weather.
Tamásha. A sight.
Tauba! "Repentance!"—a pious (?) exclamation of the Mohammedans.
Vedas. Sacred books of the Hindus.

AIDS TO PRONUNCIATION.

A without an accent is always pronounced as *u* in *fun* or *o* in *come.* Hence *panch* and *pacca* should be pronounced *punch* and *pucca.*

U is pronounced as *oo;* thus *púja* is pronounced *pooja,* and *sudra, soodra.*

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